

267

Big. Herbert W.

THE

MUTUAL DECEPTION, *K*

A COMEDY,

AS IT WAS PERFORMED

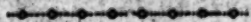
AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, DUBLIN.



QUI VULT DECIPERE, DECIPIATUR!

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR C. DILLY.



M,DCC,LXXXV.

MUTUAL DECEPTION

A C O M E D Y

AS IT WAS PERFORMED

AT THE

DUBLIN



THE MUTUAL DECEPTION

AND

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION

DEDICATION

TO HER GRACE

The DUCHESS of RUTLAND,

&c. &c. &c.

MADAM,

AS his Grace the Lord Lieutenant and your Ladyship were pleased to command, and honor this Comedy (on the fourth Night of its Performance) with your Presence and Approbation, I am gratefully to acknowledge, as an additional Compliment and Mark of Favour, the Permission granted me, of thus dedicating it to your Grace's further Protection.

In paying this Tribute of Respect, I might, without Adulation, adorn it with every Embellishment of Panegyric—but, as your pre-eminent Beauty and Elegance of Manners, add lustre to your exalted Birth and Merit, and Dignity of Station places you a distinguished Object of Admiration to the *present Age*; so the Poet and the Painter, equally inspired, and emulous to celebrate your Charms,

will borrow Immortality from you, and transmit them to *Posterity*, not only as a Model of Perfection, but Adoration.

THERE is then nothing left for me, but to unite this humble Offering with the Encomiums of a Nation, sensible of your Charms and Accomplishments, and who experience daily Proofs of your splendid Taste and Munificence, and to assure your Grace, that I have the Honor to be, with the highest Respect, and Gratitude,

Your Grace's most obliged,
and very obedient,
humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

DUBLIN,

July 12th, 1785.

PROLOGUE

P R O L O G U E
TO THE
MUTUAL DECEPTION.
(BY THE AUTHOR.)

HEAR me, ye Judges of an Author's cause;
(Anxious to please, and merit your applause)

Who blends an Episode from Gallic lore !
With a new Plot from Fancy's Comic store.

—The different grounds together mixt, and grac'd,
By our improving plans, and native taste,
Where mystic paths through dark recesses wind,
More happy scenes, and brighter views to find—

—In short the Work for your inspection brought,
With various Figures interspers'd and wrought !
May claim some Merit—since the Piece is new,
And *first* presented by our bard to you—

To fair Hibernia thus *his* Court he pays,
This humble tribute, at her feet he lays,
And rests his fame upon his Country's praise.

Hrs Play you'll find is all *Deception* through,
In plot, and Characters that *Fiction* drew ;
To raise a laugh at ridicule and whim !
(Tho' you perhaps may turn the laugh on him.)

To

To humble vice—lath nippant folly down!
 And give to virtuous deeds their just renown;
 The Comic Muse to moral ends restore,
 And blend with Nature, polish'd life once more—
 —These were the Author's views, succeed—or fail,
 Who dreads your *Sentence*, in this bold Appeal,
 —For though long nurtur'd in a *Martial life*
 'Midst noisy Camps, and Wars ambitious strife!
 Yet aw'd by *you*, and struck with trembling fear,
 He owns himself the greatest Coward **HERE**

(Pointing to the Stage.)

But why the Martial spirit thus degrade;
 You all exclaim——“ a *Soldier and afraid?*”
 • Why mayn't the Sons of Mars when duty's o'er
 • The Arts of Peace, and mental Gifts explore?
 • Must proud Bellona all their hours employ,
 • Not find a moment with the Muse to toy?
 • When the same laurel—*Fame*, must sure allow,
 • That decks the *Hero's*, crowns the *Poet's* brow!

OUR Comic Author, scarcely known to *Fame*,
 Thus humbly hopes the smallest *prig* to claim;
 Relinquish the *Triumph* to those Chiefs and Bards,
 Whose high renown th' immortal wreath rewards;
 Conscious the smiles of worth and beauty yield
 More bright rewards than glory in the field;
 And hopes your patriot zeal and kind affection
 Will grant him favor, and his Piece protection.

ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT

IN publishing this Comedy, it may be deemed incumbent on me (though already intimated in the Prologue) to confess myself indebted to a little Piece from the Theatre Italien, intitled, *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hazard*, for that Part of it relative to the quadruple Exchange of Characters, between the Mistress and Maid, Master and Man; but whoever compares it with the Original, must be sensible to allow, that the Business and Conduct of the Plot, and the two principal Male Characters are totally changed. In the Piece I allude to, *Skipwell* is *Harlequin*, and his Master a private Gentleman, instead of which, I have made the one an Officer, and the other a Soldier, while the Mistress and Maid are led into the Episode by a very different Contrivance from that of the Gallic Drama; consequently the Incidents and Sentiments arising from their Novelty of Situation, admit of little Analogy to the Original.

By thus acknowledging the Ground on which I have built Part of the Foundation of this Comedy, I must avoid the Imputation of Plagiarism, and at the same Time, convince the candid Reader of such, that I am not a mere servile Translator; for when they consider the Use made of that Fable, how I have varied that Plot and Dialogue, and have interwoven through the texture of it, an Underplot (the Offspring of my own Imagination) and at the same Time, reflect upon the Manner in which I have complicated and combined the several Incidents and Characters, preserving the Unities of Action, Time, and Place, they will perhaps allow me some Claim to Originality, not only in the sentimental, but the humorous Scenes of this Comedy.

I must embrace this Opportunity, of returning my grateful Thanks to Mr. DALY, for his obliging and friendly Attention to this Piece, and the patriotic Zeal that induced him to bring it forward, as an Encouragement to our native Productions, which in the Hands of such a liberal and judicious Manager, will not in future require the partial Stamp of a British Theatre. At the same Time, I acknowledge the Merit of the several Performers who vied with each other in their Assiduity and spirited Representation of them, and to the generous Public for their candid Reception, and repeated Approbation of this my first Attempt in the Drama.

DRAMATIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

OLD MEANWELL, - - - **Mr. Hurst.**

YOUNG MEANWELL - - - **Mr. McCready.**

SIR HARLY PARAMOUR, - - - **Mr. G. Dawson.**

COLONEL BELGRADE, - - - **Mr. Swindal.**

CAPTAIN BLENHHEIM, - - - **Mr. Fottrell.**

AMORVELL, - - - **Mr. Chambers.**

SKIPWELL, his Servant *, - - - **Mr. Ryder.**

MERVIL, a Naval Officer, - - - **Mr. Sparks.**

FERRET, a Servant of Sir Harly Paramour, - - - **Mr. Lynch.**

W O M E N.

FLORINDA, Daughter to Meanwell, - - - **Mrs. Cornelys.**

CAROLINE, Daughter to Belgrade, - - - **Miss Hitchcock.**

LETTY, Maid to Florinda, - - - **Mrs. Hitchcock.**

MADAME BORDELLE, - - - **Mrs. Hanam.**

SERVANTS.

SCENE, London.

* This Character Spoken with a Brogue.

THE
MUTUAL DECEPTION,
A COMEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Meanwell's House.*

Enter Florinda and Caroline. The latter in a Riding-Dress, and meeting each other.

FLORINDA.

NEED I tell you, my dear Caroline, how rejoiced I am to see you; and how happy I am made by this long expected visit.

CAROLINE.

Your happiness, my dear Florinda, can't possibly exceed mine, as there was scarcely any thing I so impatiently desired for as the pleasure of being with you.

FLORINDA.

But you're particularly welcome to me at this moment, when my father wishes me to change my condition;—at least (as I intimated in my last letter to you) to have a visit from my lover—you'll assist me with your friendship and advice, while the amusements of the town will recompence you, for the absence of your country friends, and relieve the pensive turn of your mind.

B

CAROLINE.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

CAROLINE.

You always took a pleasure in sympathizing with me in every situation, often by your cheerfulness revived the lowness of my spirits, and soothed my tender anxieties for the doubtful fate of a long absent father.—I know not whether at this instant I have such a friend living—(Weeps.)

FLORINDA.

Compose yourself, my dear girl—you know my affection for you; I look upon you as my sister, as my second self—the companion of my early days, and I hope the friend of my future.

CAROLINE.

I can't have a more pleasing consolation!

FLORINDA.

That adieu which your father left at his departure, when he consigned you to the protection of your *Cousin Goodly*, still gives me hopes of his safety and return.

CAROLINE.

Yes,—that letter (which indeed was the only paternal legacy he bequeathed me) in which he says, "I go, God knows whither! but whilst I fly from the duplicity and ingratitude of the European world, Fortune may perhaps throw me on a more generous lucky shore," can never be effaced from my heart.

FLORINDA.

'Tis that ambiguous passage I allude to.

CAROLINE.

Ah! my Florinda, recollect it is now full seven years since he so abruptly left us.—If there has been any intelligence of him, it never has come to my knowledge; but I must confess I found a second parent in the care and affection of my *Cousin Goodly*.

FLORINDA.

The guardian and his ward reflect mutual honour on each other!

CAROLINE.

He educated me as his own, you know, and as Fortune smiled upon his industry, he raised my expectations with it;—he always took a pleasure in promoting the friendship between you and me, and the strongest proof he could give
of

A C O M E D Y.

of it, was permitting me to come all the way from York, and pay you that visit in London.

FLORINDA.

And I thank you both for favouring me with it.

CAROLINE.

But 'twould be a very unpleasing journey indeed, should I only come to see you made unhappy;—yet, your father is too good, I think, to urge any match against your inclinations

FLORINDA.

I have some alarms however—and if I could devise any scheme of seeing this lover of mine, without his knowing me, it would be some satisfaction—for the meeting of people pre-engaged, as we are, is such a strange, formal piece of ceremony that—

CAROLINE.

I thought of this before, and your scruples put a fortunate stratagem into my head.—I recollect something of an old story, in which a distressed, romantic damsel like you, Florinda, and exactly in your situation, exchanges character with her maid.

FLORINDA.

A most lucky thought indeed!

CAROLINE.

Suppose then you and Letty were to realize such an artifice?

FLORINDA.

'Tis an excellent idea, if I can only persuade my father to come into it.

CAROLINE.

At any rate you can propose it to him—it is such a playful innocent project, that he can't have any objection to it.

FLORINDA.

I'm resolved to pursue your hint, if I gain his concurrence.—I'm convinced I can be a good substitute for my maid Letty, and she has front and vivacity enough to play the mistress.

CAROLINE.

Yes, and not having cause to be so much embarrass'd as you would be, on first seeing him, she will therefore be more likely to find out your lover's true character.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION.

FLORINDA.

It is the only stratagem to quiet all my fears, and difficulties, and I thank you for it;—but we'll consult about it hereafter, and talk on a subject you are more particularly concerned in.

CAROLINE.

What's that pray?

FLORINDA.

Your importuning Scarbrough Dangler; *Sir Harly Paramour*, and your friend Captain Blenheim, are both in town, and have left their tickets at our house already.—

CAROLINE.

As to the latter, I have a double reason for esteeming him, as an intimate companion of my father's, and for his own personal merit;—as for *Sir Harly*—

Enter a Servant.

Ma'm, *Sir Harly Paramour* is at the door, and begs permission to pay his respects to you.

FLORINDA.

Shew him into the drawing room,

[Exit Servant.]

He has too much confidence to be denied, and since he knows you're arrived, it would be in vain to refuse him admittance.

CAROLINE.

And yet, he's not a character that I like to encourage, he's such a forward teasing creature, there's no getting rid of him.—

FLORINDA.

O yes, there's the certain, but desperate remedy of marrying him—you know.

CAROLINE.

But that you know I will never do.—

FLORINDA.

However the sooner we see him now, the sooner we shall get rid of him, and so follow me, Caroline.

Scene

A C O M E D Y.

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Scene changes to another Apartment in Meanwell's House.

Re-enter Florinda and Caroline, met by Sir Harly Paramour.

SIR HARLY.

Has our bright Northern Star, at length moved from its stationary distance, revolving nearer us, to beam its brilliant and benign influence on the South, to enlighten me, and shine a constellation in the hemisphere of our metropolis.——

CAROLINE.

If this flaming compliment is designed for me, Sir Harly, I assure you it is thrown away, and much more than I deserve; as it was neither to planet-strike you, or make an illumination in the city, that I came to it, for I shall beam very little abroad.

SIR HARLY.

Come, come, Miss Belgrade, this formal icy language is not congenial to the warm regions of London;——we'll not let you be envelop'd and conceal'd in a cloud, hiding your lustre from us with all the prudery of a Lady Grace;——Shall we Miss Meanwell?

FLORINDA.

Why, Sir Harly, as my friend came on a conditional visit to me, I shall lay no restraint upon her; she shall be perfectly her own mistress, and as much at home as if she remained in the country.——

Enter Young Meanwell.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I'm just returned from the park, sister, and thus intruded on you, that I might pay my earliest respects to Miss Belgrade, and welcome her to town.

SIR HARLY.

And I'm happy you're come, Meanwell——do pray entre nous assist me in demolishing a prude—(*aside*); perhaps you'll have more influence than I have; I was just going to persuade your sister to bring her friend to Lady Croudwell's route this evening, and to offer myself as her *Cecisbeo*.

YOUNG

YOUNG MEANWELL.

O! by all means, if my sister has no other engagement— for you know all the world will be at that Pandango, and an introduction there secures one at every party in the Beau Monde.

SIR HARLY.

Yes, and though her character's fly-blown, you need not mind that; for she's so much the ton, that you might take her house for the temple of Diana, from the number of vestals that attend her mysteries, and sacrifice at her altar.

CAROLINE.

We're engaged at home, and I'm too much fatigued after my journey—besides I'm not yet prepared with the fashionable dress of the day, and really don't know the Coiffure, or what coloured feathers are in vogue.

SIR HARLY.

As to that matter you can be soon equipt—for the ladies are now so ballooned from head to foot, and so bedeckt with such a diversity of plumage, that in a crowd, what with noise, and feathers, one absolutely imagines themselves in a *Aviary*.

CAROLINE.

But surely on young women feathers are very beautiful, elegant, and becoming!

SIR HARLY.

Yes; but they could be disposed of in a very emblematic style on ladies of a certain age and complexion—on whom you must allow, they appear extremely outré and ridiculous!

FLORINDA.

In what manner pray?

SIR HARLY.

I would have the loquacious dame array'd in parrots plumes:—The vain coquet in the peacocks:—The amorous in those of the turtle dove, variegated with the sparrows and the cuckoo's.

YOUNG MEANWELL and SIR HARLY.

Hah! hah! hah!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

And thus every bird would be known by its feathers, as the contents of a shop by its sign post; hah! hah!

CAROLINE.

A C O M E D Y.

CAROLINE.

Oh you're too censorious I protest—but I hope you'll allow *your sex* deserve having their hats, like our heads, feathered in character!

SIR HARLY.

Certainly!—Retaliation is fair; let us hear it.—

CAROLINE.

What do you think then of a cockatoo for a macaroni;—a humming-bird for a politician;—an owl for a book worm;—and for a man of gallantry, Sir Harly, a *tom tit* would be no bad representative!

BOTH WOMEN.

Hah! hah! hah!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Aye! birds of a feather, and fit company for one another.

FLORINDA.

But Sir Harly, what do you think of the new fashioned girdle?

SIR HARLY.

As it encircles all the beauty of Venus, it must of course be supposed to boast the magic of her Cestus:—but when married women think it necessary to have engraved with their husbands names, and places of abode, it may be considered as holding out an invitation.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Or to ascertain a property—not always that of the *nominal possessor*.

FLORINDA.

What a malicious construction!

CAROLINE.

And a proof that no article of our dress, or conduct, can escape the perversion of satiric ill-nature.

FLORINDA (*Aside to Caroline*).

Apropos, Caroline!—Ask Sir Harly if he ever chanced to meet with *my spark* in his travels?

CAROLINE.

Pray, *Sir Harly*, when you were last abroad did you happen to know a gentleman from Ireland of the name of *Amorveil*?

SIR

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SIR HARLY.

Amorœil!—let me see;—O yes, I now perfectly recollect him, and a more strange, eccentric—medley—of a—character I never met with.

CAROLINE.

Now for it.—But his tongue's no scandal you know.

(*Aside.*)

FLORINDA.

In what respect, Sir Harly.

SIR HARLY.

My first acquaintance with him was at *Amsterdam*, where he came, I suppose, to catch the graces, as he was *there* in high fashion as a *petit maitre*; at *Paris*, he was the first jockey and fox-hunter of the age, if you were to judge by his dress and conversation.

YOUNG MEANWELL (*Aside to Florinda.*)

Give him line enough, let him run on.

SIR HARLY.

At *Rome* he wrapt himself up in the Blue Devils, and a Monastery, by way of seeing the classick world, and becoming an Antiquarian;—at *Naples* he set up for a Fortune-teller;—and at *Venice* for a Politician;—I afterwards met him among the *Russians*, where he relapsed into the Beau, and became a Dilettanti, and nothing but music and painting would go down with him: In short, he's the Child of Whim and Variety, and has fine talents for a Harlequin or Quack Doctor—

FLORINDA.

A charming prospect for me, Caroline.—(*Aside.*)

CAROLINE.

Don't believe a word of it.—(*Aside.*)

SIR HARLY.

But I did not tell you that to crown all, while he was acquiring foreign languages, and that he might preserve his mother-tongue, he had an *Hibernian Valet* as great an original as himself, who spoke the jargon of all nations, attending him about, not only as a Merry-Andrew, but an Interpreter.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Hah! hah! hah! well, Sir Harly, you'll soon have an opportunity of renewing your acquaintance with him; for this

this very Harlequin and Mountebank is expected every hour from Ireland to pay his addresses to my sister.

SIR HARLY.
The Devil he is! then I must recant all I've said of him;—(*Aside*)—notwithstanding what I've mentioned to you, Ladies, you'll find him a very pleasant, sensible, good kind of a gentleman, and with as much honour and spirit as ever came from his country.

FLORINDA.
Hey dey! Sir Harly, which of these pictures must we take for the original likeness?

SIR HARLY.
—To tell you the truth, the former account is from hearsay only; but the other from personal knowledge and regard.—Great regard, 'pon honour.

CAROLINE.
O yes, you've sufficiently proved that already.

SIR HARLY.
Yes, for though he's a queer dog, I believe—I love his odities in my soul!—Curse me if I don't;—though split me if I ever spoke to the fellow in my life.—(*Aside*.)

Enter Letty.
Ma'am, my master is in his study, and desires to speak with you instantly on particular business;—and bids me acquaint you Miss Belgrade, that he'll have the honour of waiting on you immediately after.

FLORINDA.
I'll come directly;—desire them to shew Miss Belgrade her apartments, and as soon as I have seen my father, Caroline, I'll come to you there.

CAROLINE.
And in the mean time I'll get rid of my travelling attire.

SIR HARLY.
Then, Ladies, I must bid you adieu for the present:—though Miss Belgrade you have no occasion to desert me yet—I've something particular to say to you.

CAROLINE.
Then it must be some other time, Sir Harly.
[*Exeunt Caroline, Florinda, and Young Mountwell.*]

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SIR HARLEY. *(This very thing is expected every hour.)*
Curse this little jilt, she's as cold as an icicle, and will never give me a tête à tête with her.

[Exit.]

Scene changes to another Apartment in Meanwell's House.

OLD MEANWELL *(with a Letter in his Hand.)*

This confidential information given me by *Amorveil's* father puzzles me exceedingly; I don't know how to act in it, whether 'tis better to forewarn my daughter of the plot meditated against her, or without assigning my motives, council her to turn his own weapons upon him?—the last seems to be the best method; but I will consult my son about it.—Oh, here comes Florinda and her confidante.

Enter Florinda and Letty.

FLORINDA.

What are your commands for me, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

I sent for you, my dear, to acquaint you, I've just received an account that Young *Amorveil* will be here to-day:—but you seem pensive and reserved.—Pray, child, don't be uneasy; come be candid with me, and you'll find me as indulgent as you could wish.

LETTY.

Why really, Sir, I was too precipitate in judging for my mistress, she's loth to risk her heart in the lottery of love, with so many blanks to a prize.

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, come, this is not the point—I'll be plain with you, Florinda:—You must be sensible how dear you are to me—you know I told you before, that in the last excursion I made to Ireland this business came on the tapis, his father and I agreed to the match, provided you should mutually like each other, and that no compulsion was to be used on either side.

FLORINDA.

And yet, Sir, it is an awkward kind of interview at the best.

OLD

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION
A COMEDY.

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OLD MEANWELL.

I'll lay no injunction on your obedience to me;—if *Amorveil* does'n't suit your inclinations, you need only say so, and the treaty's at an end;—if you do not please his fancy, he'll depart immediately.

LETTY.

Yes, yes, quite like a soldier's courtship—you like me, I like you; quick, let's be tether'd!—or do you like me? No, nor I you; so let's hear no more of it.

OLD MEANWELL.

I must confess, as I before told you, that I never saw *Amorveil*; he was on his travels when I visited his father—but from the character he bears in the army, and among all his acquaintance, I dare say you'll join in my prepossession for him, and have reason to thank us for bringing you together.

FLORINDA.

I'm overpower'd with your goodness, Sir; and since you throw implicit obedience out of the question, I'll hazard the trial.

OLD MEANWELL.

You shall decide for yourself, *CHICK*, and be a free agent on this occasion.

FLORINDA.

Then if I dare communicate a project that my friend *Caroline* has struck out for me—your compliance with it will entirely remove every apprehension.

OLD MEANWELL.

Tell it me, if it is feasible I promise not only my consent, but assistance—

FLORINDA.

'Tis very feasible, Sir—but I am afraid it would be intruding too much on your indulgence.

OLD MEANWELL.

No—put it to the test, try me, one should be a little too good in this world to be sufficiently so.

LETTY.

None but the best of fathers and of men could utter that expression.

C 2

OLD

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OLD MEANWELL

Explain yourself, my dear.

FLORINDA

Amorveil, you say, is expected at our house to-day. If I could so manage it that we might be together without his knowing me, I should be quite easy;—Letty has presence of mind, and cleverness—will you consent to our interchanging characters, *she* to be mistress, and *I* maid?

LETTY

And so make a gentlewoman of me in spite of the three penny planet I was born under;—rare work! nothing to do but drink tea, make curtesies, and get a husband!

FLORINDA

I really believe that you, pray for *me* every morning that you rise.

LETTY

Yes, Ma'am, and every night when I am going to bed.

OLD MEANWELL (*musings*)

Odd enough, faith! the very thing I was going to propose to her.—(*Aside.*)

FLORINDA

Well, Sir, have I your permission?

OLD MEANWELL

Yes, my dear, I permit this metamorphosis, provided neither of you quit it, 'till I forbid the contrary.—But will Letty be equal to her part of the drama?

LETTY

Me, Sir, you know I'm an old sponter, and have done every character from *Cherry* to *Beatrice* at our holiday plays in the country. Observe the sample, and refuse me due respect if you dare?

FLORINDA

With a good leg and a good foot, Uncle, and money enough in his purse, such a man would win any woman in the world, if he could get her good will.

What do you think of me now, Sir, can you discover a trace of low life in your servant Letty?

OLD MEANWELL

Hah! hah! hah! very well, very well, indeed—you'll be a capital performer; but there is no time to be lost,

lost, go and equip yourselves for your respective parts;—
make haste, and tell the rest of the family to be on their
guard.

FLORINDA.

A very little alteration will answer my purpose; for now
adays the maid is a finer lady than the mistress.

LETTY.

But I must to my toilet.—Come, Mrs. Letty, pray
attend your duty, Ma'am; and make yourself a little handy
in your new employment.

FLORINDA.

You'll be satisfied with my dutiful endeavours, Ma'am!

(*Courtesying.*)

As they are retiring, enter Young Meanwell.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Sister, I congratulate you;—I've just heard your lover
is expected here immediately.

FLORINDA.

I'm not your sister at present;—pay your attention *there*,
if you please; but I haven't time to unravel the mystery
now, and so leave my father to expound it.

(*Exit Florinda and Letty.*)

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, I'll tell you *more* than even she herself's aware
of, I'm.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

What I've already heard is enough to surprise me, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

I must enjoin you to perfect secrecy respecting what I
am going to communicate.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

By my duty and affection I promise it to you, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

Know then, when *Amorosi* comes here to day, we shall
behold him in disguise.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

In disguise.—Is it from a masquerade, or are you
going to give him a fancy-ball at his reception?

OLD

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

— **OLD MEANWELL.**
Neither;—but you must know that his father has given me private notice, that *Amorveil* (after much importunity) prevailed on him to permit his coming here in a fictitious character.

YOUNG MEANWELL.
How do you mean, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.
You recollect that *Amorveil* is still in the army, and that his old companion of a servant still lives with him; and I am further to tell you accompanies his master on the present occasion to London.—

YOUNG MEANWELL.
(aside) And what of that pray?

OLD MEANWELL.
He, in this courtship, is to represent his master's name and character, while *Amorveil* attends him in the double capacity of a private foldier, and valet, under his servant's name, *Skipwell*.—

YOUNG MEANWELL.
What a romantic piece of knight errantry!

OLD MEANWELL.
And to compleat the jest, *Florinda*, equally as uneasy respecting the sight of her lover (whose plot against her she can't have a knowledge of) has just implored me from the advice of her friend, *Caroline*, that she and *Petty* should likewise make a masquerade of it, by exchanging characters; and I've consented.—

YOUNG MEANWELL.
Oh, that's a different story.—I now see 'twill produce a very original, comic adventure!

OLD MEANWELL.
You would not advise me then to let your sister know the counterplot against her?—

YOUNG MEANWELL.
By no means, Sir, love seems to have contrived it, and let fortune have the management of it.—

[Exit.]

Scene

Scene changes to an Apartment at a Hotel.

Enter Amorveil and Skipwell.

AMORVEIL.

We'll, Skipwell, here we are in the midst of this great busy world, after a quick passage and pleasant journey from the Land of Saints.

SKIPWELL.

Aye, and upon a very foolish, chymical errand in my humble opinion, Sir.

AMORVEIL.

Chimerical you mean!—Still blundering out your hard words in spite of all I've said to you.—

SKIPWELL.

You know Sir, I'm not yet garnish'd out as you intend me—and fine feathers you know—

AMORVEIL.

Will make a peacock of a jack daw—but I must desire you'll correct your twang and proverbial phrases, else you'll ruin all, and soon discover us.—

SKIPWELL.

Never fear, Sir, when I'm dress'd in your uniform, and face to face with the lady, you'll find me the gentleman every inch of me, and that I'll behave properly before her.

AMORVEIL.

But remember what I have told you—that 'tis now quite vulgar and out of fashion to kiss any lady you're presented to:—So, mind when you are introduced to Florinda to be very distant and respectful.—

SKIPWELL.

By dad's, then I'll be revenged upon the maid, she shall pay for it, and when I get her in a corner, I'll so smuggle and touzle her!

AMORVEIL.

To be quite the modern fine gentleman, you must be frigid, scornful and indifferent to every body, and let your words drop from you cool and slow like water from a filtering stone.—

SKIPWELL.

SKIPWELL.

Whuh!—If this is your well-bred fashionable way of making love, no wonder the fire's so seldom kindled, and so soon put out!—But let me manœuvre it as we used to do at a siege, please your honour.—

AMORVEIL.

How is that, pray?

SKIPWELL.

First make regular approaches to deceive, Sir—then undermine—blow up the out-works—then enter the place, sword in hand, and the devil's in it if I don't, like a gallant fellow, make the citadel my own.—

AMORVEIL.

Ayet but consider, I am *your general*, and must reap all the honor of this victory!—

SKIPWELL.

True, Sir; and like a great many of them, take *all* the prize money to yourself into the bargain.—

AMORVEIL.

You need not fear that—for if you mind the directions I give you in every particular of your conduct while you represent me, believe me, I'll reward you faithfully for it.

SKIPWELL.

And I beg, Sir, you'll return me the compliment.—O, what a pleasant time you'll have of it;—such hot-cockles—playing hide and go seek—blind man's buff!—such telling of fortunes in the coffee-grounds;—such smacking and such romping with the maids!—such rattling and licking of the plates;—while poor pilgarlick must be stuck up stairs, cold as a dog's nose, and stiff as a broomstick, Oh Lud!—Oh Lud.—

AMORVEIL.

But I hope I shan't have occasion to keep you long from yourself.—

SKIPWELL.

But one word more, Sir, as to Florinda's waiting maid—if you offer to tamper there, by St. Patrick, I'll peach, and turn the tables on you.—

AMORVEIL.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION
A COMEDY.

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AMORVEIL.

You foolish blockhead, you! but come let's prepare ourselves—I'll soon whip on your dress, and you can be equipping yourself while I announce you at Meanwell's, which is just at hand.

SKIPWELL.

Come then, follow me, Skipwell, since you only chuse the *private station*, I'll act the *commanding officer*.

[*Exeunt*,

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

SCENE I. *Meanwell's House.*

Old and Young Meanwell, to them enter Florinda, dressed as Letty.

FLORINDA.

HERE I am, Sir—and what do you think of me? I'll endeavour to be as pert and saucy a waiting-maid as any in the precincts of St. James's.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

If *Amorveil's* servant's as clever a fellow as we're told, and has but a good opinion of himself, indeed, Sister, I think you'll be an excellent match for each other.

OLD MEANWELL.

As to that matter, if 'tis the same person he had with him on his travels—I hear a good account of him, and that he's a very great favourite of his master's.

FLORINDA.

Well, for a little sport I should not be displeased to strike his fancy in the part I represent, but I'd be more vain to

D

be

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

be sure if I could lure the notice of his master.——If I can but effect a conquest over him in this disguise, I shall have a higher opinion of myself than ever.

OLD MEANWELL.

And the little knows what a good opportunity he'll have,
(*Aside to Young Meanwell.*)

FLORINDA.

As for the attendant, his importunity will not much trouble me;—there will be something commanding in my looks and manner that will make him know his proper distance, and the awful respect due to me.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Not so fast, Sister, not so fast; you must consider this fellow will be *your equal*.

OLD MEANWELL.

And will not fail like the rest of them, to make downright love to you.

FLORINDA.

With all my heart; servants are generally communicative; love is a great babler, and soldiers always gallant; so I'll make him the historian of his master, and thus have a better chance of unraveling his true character.

Enter a Servant.

Sir, there's a person in a military dress below, just arrived in town, he says, who begs to speak with you.

OLD MEANWELL.

Conduct him this way.

[Exit Servant.]

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I suppose 'tis Amorveil's attendant coming to announce his master.——Where's Letty?

FLORINDA.

I left her at her toilet——where I dare say her looking-glass flatters her that we are very imprudent to put Amorveil in her power——but she'll be ready before he comes.

OLD MEANWELL.

O here's the want-courier!

Scene

Enter a Domestick, conducting Amorveil disguised in a Light Infantry Uniform—Mr. Skipwell.

AMORVEIL.

I was dispatched by my master, Mr. Amorveil, to Mr. Meanwell—Is it to him I have the honour of paying my duty and respects?

FLORINDA.

If the master's but as smart and well-looking as the servant—*(Aside)*.

OLD MEANWELL.

Yes, my friend, I'm the person you were sent to.

AMORVEIL.

You have no doubt, Sir, been informed of our coming; my master is dressing at the hotel, and sent me before him with his most dutiful compliments till he confirms them in person.

OLD MEANWELL.

And you execute your message in a very becoming manner, don't you think so, *Letty*? and that he's a good fore-runner of his master?

FLORINDA.

I will not give my opinion too rashly, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

But you'll welcome the young man, won't you?

FLORINDA.

Certainly!—and what's more, I think he promises very well, Sir—and that Sir Harly exaggerated as to the man—*(Aside)*.

AMORVEIL.

You do me honour in thinking so—I only wish the mistress half as charming as the maid—*(Aside)*.

OLD MEANWELL.

But what's this fancy dress you have got on? Is it your master's livery?

AMORVEIL.

Yes, Sir—and me that I prefer wearing to the livery of any monarch in the world!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Very heroic, indeed!—and well spoken for a soldier of light infantry.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

OLD MEANWELL.

But can't your master travel without his body guard? that he will not let you equip yourself like every other servant?

AMORVEIL.

O, Sir, the hardships of war endear us soldiers to one another, and we always regard our cloth too well ever to go on service, under false colours!

FLORINDA.

Then you look upon courtship as a kind of service?

AMORVEIL.

Certainly! and the only one a soldier fears, because the most fatal to his heart.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Bravo!—he's a quite La Fleur! take care of your heart, my girl—for a faithful soldier always proves himself a constant lover.

FLORINDA.

My heart indeed!

AMORVEIL.

Don't be offended; what the gentleman's pleased to say will not make me presume more on the possibility of gaining it.

FLORINDA.

A modest, pretty behaved fellow this.—(*Aside.*)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

This is mighty fine talk—but methinks it's a very serious introduction for people of your class;—such a grave formal manner don't suit either of you:—you should be free and frolicksome as if acquainted for a month.—This girl's name's Letty, what's your's, my friend?

AMORVEIL.

Skipwell, at your service, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, Tom, we're only a restraint on them.—Go, acquaint your sister of Mr. Amorveil's approach; and, Letty, do you shew the young man his master's apartments; and I desire, my friend, that you'll take good care of yourself in this house.

AMOR-

AMORVEIL.

Sir, you do me greater honour than I deserve,

[Exeunt Old and Young Meanwell.]

(After a Pause)—FLORINDA.

They're amusing themselves at my expence—but I can't help it—this lad seems neither ugly nor unpleasing; and I should not pity the servant-maid, that had him for a sweetheart.—*(Aside)*.

AMORVEIL.

This girl astonishes me—there is not a rank in life that her figure and manners wouldn't do honour to—but I'll know more of her, and gain her confidence for my own sake.—*(Aside)*. *(Addressing himself to her)*

Since we are now alone, on the friendly footing of fellow-servants, tell me, my dear, is your mistress as captivating as yourself?—At any rate she must be exceedingly vain to venture on having an attendant like you.

FLORINDA.

The archness of this question is a direct proof is't, that you've a great mind for a little flirtation with me?

AMORVEIL.

To tell you the truth, I did not come to this house with any such intention:—for soldier as I am, I keep little company with servants; I hate their low-liv'd wit, and the vulgarism of their conversation.

FLORINDA.

O, the precious coxcomb!—*(Aside.)*

AMORVEIL.

But with regard to you it is a different case—I was prepossessed in your favour the instant I entered the room; and am inclined to treat you with the highest respect;—then tell me what kind of a waiting maid are you, with charms like a princess?

FLORINDA.

What you have told me is exactly the language of all the gentlemen's servants that have seen me.

AMORVEIL.

And I should not be much surpris'd if it was the opinion of all their masters.

FLORINDA.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

FLORINDA.

I thank you for that compliment, but I must observe to you that I'm never to be duped by the cajoleries of their servants.

AMORVEIL.

That is as much as to say, that my station don't please you.

FLORINDA.

What a man for a soldier!—*(Aside.)*

True; for a fortune teller once prophesied, that I should never marry any one but a gentleman, of birth and fortune, and I have since positively sworn never to accept any thing else.

AMORVEIL.

That's odd enough!—What you have resolved on respecting a husband, I have long determined on as to a wife, and made a solemn declaration never to marry any one but a gentlewoman.

FLORINDA.

Then you need not solicit me I find.

AMORVEIL.

I'm not so much out in my pursuit as you perhaps imagine—you have a very genteel appearance! and one is often of a good family without knowing it.

FLORINDA.

Hah! hah! hah!—I should thank you for that malicious compliment, if it was not at the expence of my mother.

AMORVEIL.

Revenge yourself on mine then, if you think I'm entitled to it.

FLORINDA.

He really deserves it—*(Aside.)*—But this is not the point, Mr. Skipwell, let us have done with this cattery, a man of wealth and fashion is what I aspire to, and I'll not give up a tittle of it.

AMORVEIL.

Egad! had I the good fortune to have been born such, I should verify the fortune-teller's prediction.

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.
Come, come, this is too much—I desire once more
you'll quiet this topic.

AMORVEIL.
You must throw away your charms then.

FLORINDA.
I wonder what keeps me listening to him—*(Aside)*
You will not have done then—I must leave you—I really
should have done so before—*(Aside—going)*

AMORVEIL.
Stay one moment if you please—I had something par-
ticular to ask you, but it's gone quite out of my head.

FLORINDA *(returning)*.
I too had something to say to you, but you have con-
fused every recollection of it!

AMORVEIL.
O: now I remember asking you, if your mistress was
as pleasing as yourself?

FLORINDA.
This is only returning to the old subject.

AMORVEIL.
Oh, no fair Lititia!—this merely concerns my Master.

FLORINDA.
It was relative to him too that I wished to speak;—
tell me candidly what sort of a man he is; your attachment
gives me a good opinion of him; he must have some me-
rit when you serve him.

AMORVEIL.
You can't refuse me thanking you for that flattering
compliment however.

FLORINDA.
Don't take notice of it—it was said inadvertently,
and can't be recalled.

AMORVEIL.
There again is one of those cold cruel answers that
chill me—but do what you please, I have only to regret
that fortune has not allotted me a station worthy of you.

FLORINDA.
Let's have no more of this—I wish your master was
come—but since you'll not give his character, my mis-
tress

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

truss must study it herself; —and now I must leave you—
you see that apartment, it's your masters; and you'll find
your's next the dressing room.

(*Exeunt, Amorveil, looking tenderly at her.*)

Scene changes to the Park.

Enter Sir Harly Paramour and Captain Blenheim.

SIR HARLY.

Tell you, Blenheim, I must positively have this girl—
she's an exquisite fine piece, and in *her* dependant situation;
what can she desire better than a good settlement;—
her arrival in town is opportunely lucky to favour my
designs.

BLENHEIM.

You do not consider that, though her father mayn't be
living, *Caroline* has every expectation from her adopted
one; at any rate she has beauty and merit deserving the
most distinguished connection that marriage can place
her in.

SIR HARLY.

Perhaps she may—but what have I done to deserve
matrimony?—Your dull contracted notions are not for
a *seavoir viors*—what I with my youth, rank, and for-
tune, to sink into the drowsy arms of wedlock!

BLENHEIM.

Certainly not, without a determined constancy, and
serious attachment.

SIR HARLY.

No; unbounded pleasurable liberty is mine—"love
light as air"—Besides a man of the world has no more
business with a wife, than a sailor with a horse; there are
hacks and women in every town they go to.

BLENHEIM.

Yes—but as the one might break your neck, so the
other would ruin your health and fortune.

SIR HARLY.

Come, come, Blenheim, these canting puritanic airs
that you give yourself will never go down with me;
you've

you've been too much in the world—too long in the army, not to love a frolic.

BLENHEIM.

I hope, Sir Harly, I do not forfeit a claim to honour and virtue from serving my country as a soldier.—If I did—

SIR HARLY.

Pshaw! a truce with your sentimental hypocrisy;—had you flaid out the party I introduced you to last night at the gardens, we should have made a compleat convert of you. Whiff and wine gave a relish to each other, and afterwards produced the usual frolick incident to the genius of the place!

BLENHEIM.

O, I heard of you and your company as I returned from the play.

SIR HARLY.

Yes, but not that I slipt from them, and flew (late as it was) to Sir Philip Azeon's.—Whisper, Blenheim,—(as whispering)—Lady Azeon is as condescending as she is handsome;—you understand me—

BLENHEIM.

Why, sure you would not intrigue with the wife of your bosom friend?

SIR HARLY.

Aye, with the wife of my brother, if she had an inclination.

BLENHEIM.

What a wretch!—and how severe my situation to be dependant on such an unprincipled profligate!—(Aside.)

SIR HARLY.

But, Blenheim, you must contrive to pick a quarrel with Sir Philip, and cut the cuckold's throat for me; for suspecting, I suppose, that I had slipt away to his house, he came upon me unawares, caught me in rather an awkward situation with Lady Azeon, and now talks of a challenge.

BLENHEIM.

I really do not comprehend you, Sir, you certainly do not know the kind of man you are talking to—

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SIR HARLY.

But you may depend upon my influence for what you solicit——do this——get me Caroline, and you'll find me as you deserve;—so let me see you as soon as possible——and 'till then adieu!——" none without hope e'er lov'd the brightest fair."

[Exit.]

MANET BLENHEIM.

"But love will hope when reason should despair"——What a reprobate it is, and how he tramples on the laws of honour, love, and friendship!——but I'll fly to Caroline, acquaint her with Sir-Harly's true character, reveal his infamous designs, and support her reputation and my own, in spite of the wretch who may be mean enough to injure and renounce me for it.

[Exit.]

Scene changes to an Apartment in Meanwell's House.

Enter Amorveil and Florinda. Skipwell, dress'd in an Officer's Uniform, entering at the opposite Door.

FLORINDA.

Let's have no more of this nonsense——O here's your matter come at last; I must stay and have a peep at him.

SKIPWELL.

Ah! Skipwell, are you there?——well, were my baggage and you graciously received?

AMORVEIL.

It was impossible it could be otherwise, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Go, and acquaint my father-in-law and my wife of my arrival.

FLORINDA.

What a disagreeable fellow.—(Aside)—I suppose you mean Mr. Meanwell and his daughter, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Yes, my wife and father-in-law, 'tis the same thing, is not it, child? I'm come to be married, and they expect me for that purpose; don't they? It wants nothing but the ceremony, and that's a trifle.

FLORINDA.

A COMEDY.

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FLORINDA.

'Tis a trifle however requiring some serious consideration, Sir——

SKIPWELL.

Perhaps so; but the more one thinks of it, the less they'll like it, 'too much pudding will choak a dog.'

AMORVEIL.

Oh! curse your proverbs, I wish they'd choak you——
(*Aside*)

FLORINDA.

I see that sense and merit are at a very cheap rate in your country——(*Aside to Caroline.*)

SKIPWELL.

What are you saying to my servant-man, girl?

FLORINDA.

Nothing, Sir——but——that I wonder what keeps my master.

SKIPWELL.

Why not my father-in-law, pray?

FLORINDA.

Because he is not yet so.

AMORVEIL.

Certainly not, Sir, 'till the nuptials are ready, and in fact accomplished.

SKIPWELL.

O, hangolee for ever!——I'm ready in a crack——and so is the Lady, I'll be bail for her.

FLORINDA.

Oh! the vulgar wretch——(*Aside*)——but we must first dance at your wedding, Sir—and get gloves and favours.

SKIPWELL.

And was any of my country ever backwards at a wedding!——though we often get only black eyes for favours——and so call my father-in-law pray!

AMORVEIL.

Was there ever such an ignorant provoking rascal?——

(*Aside*)

FLORINDA.

You are in great haste to be married, Sir, though for what you know my mistress may be a great coquette, or an arrant scold!

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION.

SKIPWELL.

That won't frighten me:—a man living in a barrack is soon used to the clatter of the drums, and may lie close to a church steeple, without being disturbed by the bells.

FLORINDA.

What delicate sentiments!—(*Aside*)—You speak quite like a philosopher, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

O, yes, very like a FIELD OFFICER!

AMORVEIL.

Was there ever such an infernal blunderer?—(*Aside*)

SKIPWELL.

But harky'e, my girl; are you my Lady's waiting-maid *here*, and single, I presume by your innocence?—She's a mighty fine girl, upon my honour!

FLORINDA.

Both, Sir—but not at *your* service—(*Aside*)

SKIPWELL.

Well, how do you like me? Don't you think I shall prove very agreeable *here*?

FLORINDA.

O! mighty agreeable!—*very* agreeable indeed, Sir!

SKIPWELL.

That's well; encourage that notion, it may be serviceable to yourself, my dear, in the end—She's a nice tit—mind our bargain, Master—mayn't I taste her head—(*Aside*)

AMORVEIL.

No, fool—(*Aside*)

FLORINDA.

Well, Sir, I'll go acquaint my master that you're come; they certainly must have forgot to tell him.—Capricious fate! were ever two men so misplaced in life—(*Aside*)

[Exit Florinda.]

SKIPWELL.

Well, Sir, you see the beginning of the plot goes off very well—I already prove agreeable, and have made my way with the prime minister.

AMORVEIL.

You ill-manner'd, incorrigible blockhead!

SKIP-

SKIPWELL.

What, Sir, with so pleasing an address! so genteel an air as mine!—*(Looking at himself)*

AMORVEIL.

After all the instructions I gave you, to behave with such ignorance and vulgarity!—I particularly desired you to be reserved and sedate; to hide your brogue, and avoid proverbs; but there's no making a racer of a jack-ass.

SKIPWELL.

That sounds very like a proverb, Sir;—then you would have me as mute as a fish, and not say a word.

AMORVEIL.

I was a fool to trust myself and the honour of my profession into the hands of such a buffoon;—you have not studied *Don Quixote's* advice to *Sancho*, as I desired you.

SKIPWELL.

Yes, Sir, and *Chesterfield's* graces too:—Consider, Sir, I have not been long a gentleman, but I'll improve by practice; and since I have not gravity enough for you, in future I'll be quite sad, and cry my eyes out, if you chuse it, Sir.

AMORVEIL.

I do not know what to think, say, or do——I'm quite embarrassed——I wish I never had undertaken this adventure.

SKIPWELL.

Why, Sir, does not the lady suit your palate?

AMORVEIL.

Silence;—here's somebody coming——O! it is Mr. Meanwell, so mind my advice, *deport* yourself properly; and if he asks you about Ireland, do not forget the lesson I gave you, particularly *the speech*.——

SKIPWELL.

Mum!——never fear, Sir;—I'll report myself properly.

[Exit Amorveil.]

Enter Old Meanwell.

OLD MEANWELL.

My dear, Mr. Amorveil, I ask you a thousand pardons for having been out of the way on your arrival.

SKIF-

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION.

SKIPWELL.

A thousand pardons, Sir—if they came from *Rome*, are quite too many—*one* is sufficient for one *omission*;—but if I had a million, they should be at your service.

OLD MEANWELL.

I hope I shall not have occasion for any *more*, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

You're to command, and it's my duty to obey, Sir—
'What compliments between the old cow and the haystack?'—(*Aside*)

OLD MEANWELL.

But I'm quite rejoiced to see you here, Sir; I hope you left my good old friend, your father, perfectly well, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Never better, Sir, never better, and always at your service.

OLD MEANWELL.

So, I find you could not resist visiting your Dear Hibernia, before your regiment and your mistress; you longed, I suppose, to behold the many happy changes, that she had experienced in your absence.

SKIPWELL.

Yes, Sir—now for the speech—(*Aside*)—and was rejoiced to find my country as free in her commerce and constitution as England—with equal prospects of wealth, fame, and prosperity before her—as my master says—

OLD MEANWELL.

Your master!

SKIPWELL.

O curse my blundering tongue—(*Aside*)—Master!—did I say Master?—O yes, the *Quarter-Master* of our regiment, a staff-officer, Sir—And—and as great a politician as I am—Hem! to be sure I an't the dandy—
(*Aside*)

OLD MEANWELL.

O, your humble servant, Sir!—well recovered, faith!—(*Aside*)—However we will defer politicks 'till we are over the bottle.

SKIPWELL.

O yes—politicks is a dry subject sure enough.

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

But tell me, Mr. Amorveil, how you liked the continent and the courts you've seen in your travels?

SKIPWELL.

O vastly well, Sir—I learned to caper and take snuff in France;—the art of war and drinking in Germany;—to be sulky and proud as a grandee, in Spain;—to sing and play the fiddle in Italy;—and among the Turks to chew opium like tobacco;—as to *learning* and good manners, they're quite natural to me.

OLD MEANWELL.

Very great accomplishments indeed!

SKIPWELL.

But I'm vastly impatient to see your fair daughter, Sir, and have been equipping and *adamizing* myself as you see, to win her—

OLD MEANWELL.

Hah! hah! hah!—(*Aside*)—you judged well, the dress recommends the wearer, and “the brave deserve the fair.”

SKIPWELL.

But when shall I see her, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

Oh: immediately!—She has not been very well, rather a little—agitated—expecting you.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! dear Sir—

OLD MEANWELL.

The bashfulness of a *maid* you know!—In the mean time, will you take any refreshment after your journey?

SKIPWELL.

Will a duck swim?—(*Aside*)—I never refuse to crack a bottle with an honest fellow, for I love to wet my whistle.

OLD MEANWELL.

It's rather early for drinking—But—

SKIPWELL (*Seeing Amorveil entering from the side Scene*).

And here's this dog, Skipwell, whose only fault is loving a drop too much.

AMOR-

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION.

AMORVELL.

Still making a jack-pudding of yourself—*(Aside)*—Did you call me, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, I desired him to take good care of himself.

SKIPWELL.

Never fear him, Sir—he learned that from his master, who has all the appetites of a prince.

OLD MEANWELL.

The house and cellar are at the service of both.

SKIPWELL.

For my part I'll be content with the cellar—*(Aside)*

AMORVELL.

Always thinking of guzzling—*(Aside)*

OLD MEANWELL.

Pray go on, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! not for the world—I'll follow you, Sir—that would be ignorance indeed, and discover me at once.

(Aside)

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, Sir, I'll shew you the way—

AMORVELL.

Oh! what a curious representative I have got in him.

(Aside)

Scene changes to another Apartment.

Enter Florinda and Caroline.

FLORINDA.

My dear Caroline, you have brought me into the oddest dilemma you can imagine;—this masquerade that you've involved me in, will, I'm afraid, subject me to a thousand difficulties, and yet it would be too soon to throw off the disguise.

CAROLINE.

You've seen your lover then, and he is not such a one as you pictured to yourself, or did he fit for Sir Harry's portrait of him?

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

Seen him! O yes, I've seen enough of him to disgust me, and partiality apart, his attendant Skipwell is much the prettier gentleman of the two, nor should he ever have come courting with such an appendage to his retinue.

CAROLINE.
So that in this piece of Quixotism, the Squire is likely to rival the Knight. Take care, Florinda, you don't make a compleat romance of it, and follow your "soldier lad-die."

FLORINDA.

You know me too well to think me capable of any indiscretion; but really my situation makes me liable to such an intimacy with *Amorosi's* attendant, that from what I've already seen, I prefer his conversation to his master's.

CAROLINE.

And have you not as yet been able to find out your lover's character?—No one could be more intelligent on that subject than *Skipwell*, I should think.

FLORINDA.

But he's such a discreet cunning fellow, that whenever I attempt it, he avoids an explanation, by some well-turned ingenious compliment to myself, that at once puzzles, pleases, and entertains me.

CAROLINE.

And to avoid appearing insensible, you condescend to hear him I suppose, for flattery is so fascinating that none of us can resist its magic!

FLORINDA.

But consider who it is from—I must however beg your excuse to allow me this day at least to finish the drama, and then, *Caroline*, I'll be at your command to attend you to all public places, and wherever you please.

CAROLINE.

Make no apology—Our happiness is so much linked together, that whatever contributes to your's is both a satisfaction and amusement to me.

FLORINDA.

My kind obliging girl!

F

CARO-

CAROLINE.

So I'll detain you no longer from your project; since
I can't assist you in the accomplishment of it.

FLORINDA.

Then farewell, my dear——and now to look over
Letty's hand, and see what kind of a game she and her
partner are playing.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Meanwell's House.*

Old Meanwell, and Letty, dress'd as Florinda.

OLD MEANWELL.

WELL, Letty, I see you are dress'd for your character——what have you to say to me?

LETTY.

Sir, something very particular to communicate to you.

OLD MEANWELL.

Relative to what?

LETTY.

To clear up matters, that you may have nothing to re-
proach me with hereafter.

OLD MEANWELL.

You're very serious I find.

LETTY.

Very serious I assure you, Sir——I readily became an
accomplice in the plot, not imagining any consequence
from it to myself.

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

Why? what mighty consequence has happened to you?

LETTY.

'Tis a bold task to praise one's self; but in spite of all the rules of modesty, I must inform you, Sir, that if you do not reveal matters, your intended son-in-law won't have a heart to give my mistress—It is time the mask was thrown off, and that he should know who is who—else I cannot be answerable for it a day longer.

OLD MEANWELL.

And what makes you imagine he will not admire my daughter when he comes to a thorough knowledge of her?

—Have you any doubt of her charms, pray?

LETTY.

By no means, Sir, but you have no opinion of mine—I forwarn you however that they are doing great execution—and I advise you to guard against them.

OLD MEANWELL.

O, Ma'am, I beg you a thousand pardons, I was not acquainted with your powers. Hah! hah! hah!

LETTY.

Very well, Sir, laugh as much as you please, and sneer at my confidence; but believe me I'm right, and I'll gain my point if I chuse it.

OLD MEANWELL.

Very well, Letty, do so, I shall not hinder you, assure yourself.

LETTY.

I must be more explicit, Sir—Mr. Amorveil's heart is going very fast; I've already won it—I know I am not deserving of it—he'll have a wretched taste, and all that—

OLD MEANWELL.

O, by no means—you are too humble indeed.

LETTY.

You may conceive whatever you please, Sir; but—mind what I tell you, Sir, by to-morrow he'll be entirely in my leading-strings.

OLD MEANWELL.

With all my heart, if he loves you so desperately let him marry you.

F 2

LETTY.

LETTY.

What—and you'll not forbid the bans, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

Not I, upon my honour, if you can bring him to it.

LETTY.

Once more I warn you to take care, Sir—I have not yet given full scope to my powers, and been hitherto restrained by the duty I owed the family—but if I'm permitted to display myself, at liberty to exert all the arts of my sex, I'll subdue, I'll conquer all before me.

OLD MEANWELL.

Conquer, captivate, sink, burn and destroy—in short—marry him; I give you full permission and consent.

LETTY.

—Then, Sir, I thank you and consider my fortune as already made.

OLD MEANWELL.

But here comes your conquering hero.

Enter Skipwell.

SKIPWELL.

Ah! have I at length found you my enchanting fair one? I have been hunting all round the house for you, like a young hound after a liveret, as I'm not happy a minute from your sight—your servant, my father-in-law that is to be—

OLD MEANWELL.

Good bye, my children; a third person on these occasions is not the most acceptable company—So I will leave you to yourselves—Love first and marry afterwards.

SKIPWELL.

I'm glad, Sir, you have reversed the proverb, but I can do those two things both together.

OLD MEANWELL.

Have a little patience, do not hurry my daughter's spirits, her nerves are very delicate. *[Exit.]*

SKIPWELL.

Yes, something like fiddle strings—they will bear playing upon—*(Aside)*—How much at his ease the old gentle—

gentleman talks, and how quietly he bids us have patience.

LETTY. I had lived and I had loved him.

And can I believe, Sir, you are such an enemy to delay? It is certainly your politeness and gallantry make you say so; for I am but just known to you; your love cannot have grown to such a pitch already; I may say it is but newly born.

SKIPWELL.

You're mistaken, fair lady—a love of your making sprouts up all at once like a musbroom.—The firstogle from the gable-end of your bright eye made him a fine, jolly, amorous, full-grown boy—like Cupid in the picture at Rome.—Ah! make much of him then, since you are Venus the mother of him.

LETTY.

How much like a lover and a traveller he talks—(Aside) You cannot say, Sir, that he has been cruelly treated, though he is a bold, impudent fellow, you must own.

SKIPWELL.

'Till he is better provided for, give him, then, this pretty, little, white hand of yours for a play thing to amuse the child—"When the cat's away the mice will play."

LETTY.

There then, you little coaxing, enticing, pleasing rogue, you, since I cannot quiet you any other way.

(Giving him her hand.)

SKIPWELL.

Dear sweet, charming sugar-candy of my heart, how it fires me like—a squib of whiskey!

(Kissing it.)

LETTY.

How familiar and complaisant—(Aside)—Stop, stop, you are too greedy—do not take it for a ginger-bread baby, or think that you are sucking a China orange.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! it is such a relish I could devour it thumb, fingers and all—what a condescending lady!

LETTY.

Is it possible you can love me to such a pitch—I can hardly believe the reality of it.

SKIPWELL.

SKIPWELL.
Talk not to me of what's possible; I love you to—
What the devil shall I say—*(Aside)*—to botheration; and
you know I do—

LETTY.
O! there's no resisting you red coats—But hift!—
here is some body coming—Oh, it is your servant;

Enter Amorveil.

AMORVEIL.
May I be allowed the liberty of speaking to you, Sir?

SKIPWELL.
No;—curs'd be the puppy that dare intrude on our
privacy, and interrupt our conversation—Begone, Sir,
or else—

AMORVEIL.

I have not above a word or two to say, Sir.

SKIPWELL.
Excuse me, Ma'am, if he utters above two money-sylla-
bubs the third shall be his discharge.

AMORVEIL.
Oh! damn your syllabubs—Come here, Sirrah, un-
gracious dunderhead, come near—*(Aside)*

SKIPWELL.

Fine usage for an officer, and a gentleman this—*(Aside
to Amorveil)*—Come, dispatch, or I'll trounce your jacket—
Excuse me, my queen.

LETTY.

Use no ceremony with me, Sir, finish your business—

AMORVEIL.

Hear me, you scaramouch, disengage yourself from all
this mummery—do not give into it; appear very serious
and dissatisfied—nay, out of humour—you understand
me—*(Aside to Skipwell)*

SKIPWELL.

Mum—*(Aside)*—it is very well; let him call to-morrow
or this evening—if you chuse, Ma'am—Go, Sirrah,
avaunt! and tell him so!

[Exit Amorveil.]

LETTY.

LETTY.

Pray who is it, Sir?

SKIPWELL.

Oh, *no body*, Ma'am, some snip of a taylor about wedding cloaths, that's all—*as* plague on the impertinence of servants!

LETTY.

They are very troublesome indeed, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! Ma'am, but for this intrusion, I had such tender things to say to you—though curse me if I'm not almost run a-ground—*(Aside)*—But I can only remember what is uppermost in my heart—that I love you, and hope I may expect a mutual return!

LETTY.

'Tis a kind of a sudden—unexpected—question, Sir;—but you may live in hopes—*(Affectedly)*

SKIPWELL.

Do you think then you could make a little hole in your heart for me to creep in to—*(Languishing)*

LETTY.

Oh! now you are too coaxing, Sir, consider the decorum of my sex—you have too much tinder and touchwood about you, and have not patience to raise a flame!

SKIPWELL.

Let me first light up a match between us—You will be the flint, I the steel, and so we'll strike up a flash of love between us!

LETTY.

But what would you have me say, Sir?

SKIPWELL.

Only that you love me—be merely my echo, and repeat my words my princess.

LETTY.

You are very pressing, Sir—Well I believe I love you, Sir.—*(Holding up her fan)*

SKIPWELL.

Oh! my dear little jewel—how you transport me! I shall die with joy—I'll not let you say another word, but seal up your lips with mine—*(Kissing her)*

LETTY.

LETTY.

Oh, fye, Sir——But will your passion be always this way? Perhaps when you know me thoroughly, you will love me less.

SKIPWELL.

Oh, ho! so kissing will go down with her I find—*(Aside)*

Ah, Ma'am, when it comes to that you'll be the greatest loser, "and find yourself in the wrong box."—*(Aside)*

LETTY.

You do not know what kind of a woman I am, Sir; I am not so worthy of you as you think me.

SKIPWELL.

And I should be on my knees when I speak to you, Ma'am.

LETTY.

As to me, I should have chosen you in any station if you had not a coat to your back, or a shilling to bless yourself.

SKIPWELL.

That may be put to the trial—but this is odd language for a lady—*(Aside)*

LETTY.

Can I flatter myself that you'd be so kind to me?

SKIPWELL.

Ah! my darling, were you only the flea-catcher of a lady's lap-dog, or that I saw you with the proker in your hand making the kitchen-fire, I would kneel to *that* as my sceptre, and obey you; that I would my Queen of Hearts!

LETTY.

I shall soon put that to the test—but these are queer phrases for a gentleman—*(Aside)*—If I could be sure your love was sincere,

SKIPWELL.

Let us then swear to be true and faithful to each other, in spite of all the chances and chequers of this mortal life.

LETTY.

With all hearts—*(They both drop on their knees together)*—Hear us, O! Master Cupid!

SKIP-

THE COMEDY.

21

SKIPWELL.

And *Cymon*, God of Marriage.

LETTY.

Who?

SKIPWELL.

Cymon.

LETTY.

Hymen you mean.

SKIPWELL.

True, *he was* a High-man sure enough!

LETTY.

Hear our vows that we will ever love and take each other for better for worse——though fortune should betray our hopes and make beggars of us——

SKIPWELL.

And I consent with all my soul——and now let's sign and seal the bargain——(*Kissing her.*)

(*They both rise.*)

LETTY.

That seals the deed with a witness——and now——but here's another coming to interrupt us——Hush!

Enter Florinda.

LETTY.

What do you want, Letty?

FLORINDA.

A message to you, Ma'am.

SKIPWELL.

Must we always be the slaves of servants——you see we are busy, my child; cannot you come again? *Filly de Chambers* should not intrude; but when they are called for.

FLORINDA.

I've private business with my Lady, Sir.

LETTY.

Can't you put it off?

FLORINDA.

Why, really——Ma'am——

SKIPWELL.

Curse that *Why*——it throws me into the dumps;——I tell you girl, *your absence would be very good company.*

G

FLORINDA.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

FLORINDA.

Oh! the disagreeable wretch—*(Aside)*—It is very urgent, Ma'am.

LETTY.

Then, Sir, with your leave—

SKIPWELL.

If it must be so, it must; then adieu! my dearest honey!—*(Looking tenderly at each other.)*

[Exeunt Florinda and Letty.]

MANET SKIPWELL.

This is all mighty fine—but shan't I be guilty of disobedience of orders, in betraying my master?—No—he has transmogrified me into a gentleman;—at least the representative of one;—and I am not the first representative that has betrayed his trust;—but as honesty is said to be the best policy, I'll go tell him what a caterwauling my Tabby keeps, and he's too much a man of gallantry to let me disappoint her. *[Exit.]*

Scene changes to a Library, a Table and Books on it.

Caroline dressed, and discovered reading.

CAROLINE.

Oh! how it speaks to the heart, and recalls all my father to me!

Enter a Servant.

Ma'am, Captain Blenheim to wait upon you.

Enter Blenheim.

BLENHEIM.

I am sorry to interrupt your studies, Ma'am, though happy in the honour of meeting you here, and alone.

CAROLINE.

Your company brings its best apology with it—pray be seated, Mr. Blenheim—when I am alone, reading, you know, is my favourite amusement.

BLENHEIM.

If you say so, the world will laugh at you—for reading is quite unfashionable now.

CAROLINE.

CAROLINE.

And to compleat the folly I sometimes read novels——
and was just as you came in at that affecting passage in the
Man of Feeling where *Old Edwards* returns from the toils of
warfare and adversity, in search of his native home and
family——Oh! it is a pathetic tale that wounds my sym-
pathising heart, and reminds me of a father—(*Weeps*)

BLENHEIM.

He was indeed a man of honour, and philanthropy, whom
I valued and regarded as myself——But this visit was not
to see you thus afflicted, but to prove my pure and disin-
terested esteem for you.

CAROLINE.

What can he mean?—(*Aside*)

BLENHEIM.

You've heard what brought me to town——to meet
and solicit my friends interest, and Sir Harly Paramour's
patronage (who represents the place I am connected in)
to back my services for some promotion I am in expecta-
tion of——this has given me more familiar intercourse
with Sir Harly than ever——

CAROLINE.

And what of him, pray?

BLENHEIM.

You know, it was I first introduced him to you——
expecting that your beauty and accomplishments would
have made an impression on him.

CAROLINE.

"I was a vanity I never was ambitious of.

BLENHEIM.

Such a passion, as merit like yours inspires——and the
daughter of my friend deserves;—yet if you knew what I
felt whilst I cherished a hope (as I thought) so much to
your advantage——You would——

CAROLINE.

Pray proceed, Sir.

BLENHEIM.

But I mistook his character; and while I thought he
meant you honourable love, and was preparing to throw
his person and his fortune at your feet——Since I came to

town, he spoke of you in a manner unfit for me to mention—or you to hear.

CAROLINE.

Of me!—Pray explain yourself—*(They rise)*

BLENHEIM.

And was mean enough to think, I would be accessory to his licentious designs—But you must never see him more—for the lover that hesitates whether his addressee should be those of a libertine or a man of honour, ought never to be countenanced by a woman of virtue.

CAROLINE.

I thank you, Mr. Blenheim, for this generous, friendly proof of your regard;—but it is easy to convince you I believe, that I never thought much of him—any attention from me was solely on account of introduction.

BLENHEIM.

I was then ignorant of his vices—they were glossed by a polish of the world, that I mistook for youthful animation and urbanity!—but I since find he has neither the principles of honour, nor, I fear, the spirit of a gentleman.

CAROLINE.

You may depend upon it he shall never have admittance to my company again—and I'll desire my friend Florinda to have him denied here.

BLENHEIM.

And now, Miss Belgrade, I must take my leave—as I have unburthened my mind—but not my heart—*(Aside)*—but depend on my friendship and protection if required.

CAROLINE.

I hope I shall see you again!

BLENHEIM.

As soon, and often as I can—We readily visit where merit and our esteem invite us.

[Exit.]

CAROLINE.

Kind, endearing man! gratitude now owes him as much as affection did before.

[Exit.]

Scene

Scene changes to another Apartment.

Enter Florinda.

FLORINDA.

You just behaved as I wished you, Letty, not to send away that detestable fellow, 'till I became a witness to his vulgarity and ill-breeding.

LETTY.

Upon my word, Ma'am it is too much for me to play two parts at once—I must either be mistress or maid, to command or obey.

FLORINDA.

Well, but since he is not present, listen to me as your superior—You plainly see that he is not agreeable to me.

LETTY.

You have not had time to examine him, Ma'am!

FLORINDA.

Is it necessary to see him above twice, to judge what kind of a man he is?—I tell you again he will not answer my purpose.

LETTY.

But he will mine though—*(Aside)*—Perhaps your father thinks otherwise, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

It may be so; for he avoids meeting me; nor have I exchanged a syllable with him since Amorveil's arrival—Thus circumstanced, it is only you, Letty, that can extricate me from this troublesome affair, by telling the gentleman that he does not suit your taste.

LETTY.

I cannot indeed, Ma'am—as he is very agreeable to myself.—*(Aside)*

FLORINDA.

You cannot truly!—Pray what hinders you?

LETTY.

Your father.

FLORINDA.

He prevent you; that is impossible.

LETTY.

LETTY.

Positively forbade me, Ma'am!

FLORINDA.

Well, it is my orders you acquaint him that my distaste to this gentleman is invisible; and I cannot think, after what he promised, that he'll deceive me by detaining Amorveil.

LETTY.

Has not his coxcomb of a ship prejudiced you against him, by some stories to his disadvantage?

FLORINDA.

Pray, Ma'am, who gave you liberty to abuse any one? — What could his servant say to disgust me more than his own ill manners!

LETTY.

I however mistrust that you listen too much to this prating jackanapes of a soldier—who gives himself airs because he meets encouragement; I suppose—*(Warmly)*

FLORINDA.

I must once more desire that you will behave yourself respectfully; the young man is very discreet, sensible and deserving!

LETTY.

Yes, yes, Ma'am, he's a very good flirt, and has art enough to prejudice people in his favour.

FLORINDA.

But I desire you'll not impute to the servant the fixed abhorrence I bear against the master.

LETTY.

Oh! Ma'am, since you take his part, I will not offend you by saying any thing to his disadvantage.

FLORINDA.

I take his part—I justify him—*(flattered)*

LETTY.

Indeed, Ma'am, you seem to entertain a very favourable kind of opinion of him!

FLORINDA.

I a favourable—I a kind opinion of him—what insolence! you absolutely lose all respect for me, and fancy yourself, I believe, mistress in reality.

LETTY.

I am sorry that such a trifle should offend you, Ma'am.

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

Get out of my sight—I'll take other measures to disengage myself from this vexatious business.

[Exit Letty.]

MANET FLORINDA.

I tremble at the bare thoughts of her suggestion!—How insolently servants behave when we put ourselves in their power, and are indiscreet enough to trust them with our secrets! I am vexed at what she said—it was relative to a servant;—well, poor fellow, it is not his fault, and I should not vent my displeasure on him—but I see him yonder musing and disturbed—it will only distress me to meet him—so I will avoid him.

Scene changes to the Street before Meanwell's House.

Enter Sir Harly Paramour, dressed.

SIR HARLY.

And now to make a close attack on Caroline—She must have a heart of adamant if this dress and these graces do not soften it—yet there is something about this girl that freezes one with respect whilst she charms you—but is not she a woman; and which of them ever yet resisted me?—But if she holds out long, it will be for better terms of capitulation, like a besieged town, to enhance the conquest in proportion to the fame of the besieger.—But now, herald-like, I must sound a parley—(Knocks at the door.)

A Servant appears.

SIR HARLY.

Pray, Sir, is Miss Belgrade within?

SERVANT.

I believe she is—(Looking at him stedfastly.)—Oh! no, Sir, she's not at home—she—she—

SIR HARLY.

Come, come, I'm sure she's within.—Tell her it is me, and that I am here to pay my respects to her.

SERVANT.

SERVANT.

I cannot indeed, Sir—for she is not at home, and if she was at home, she desires not to be at home to-day.

SIR HARLY.

Are you sure of this?—Come, my friend, tell me the truth, you are a very trusty, honest fellow—(*Giving him money*)—She is at home—

SERVANT.

Hush! hush!—she is within; but the very instant Captain Blenheim quit us this morning from a visit, positive orders were given never to admit you—may I lose my place if it is not true—I dare not stay to say more—so pray retire, Sir.

[Exit.

SIR HARLY.

So, Mr. Blenheim, you have betrayed our confederacy, and like a spy revealed my designs to the enemy—but I'll soon punish your treachery.—Let me see—(*Looking at his watch*)—this is about the time, and if I have power you shall soon repent its influence;—but I have opened my batteries before *Caroline*, and since she refuses to capitulate, I must find a way to take her by stratagem or storm.

Scene changes to an Apartment in Meanwell's House.

Enter Florinda, Amorveil following.

AMORVEIL.

Are you avoiding me, fair Letitia? What have I done to offend you? Believe me, for the short time we have to be together, you need not put yourself under any restraint.

FLORINDA.

What! is your master going to leave us? We shall not have much loss of him.

AMORVEIL.

Nor of me neither; I have finished your sentence, have not I, Letty?

FLORINDA.

I would not have tacked that to it, as I was not thinking of you.

AMORVEIL.

AMORVEIL.

And I never lose sight of you.

FLORINDA.

Hear me once for all, Skipwell—*go, come, or stay*, are equally indifferent to me—I neither wish you good nor evil—neither like you, nor dislike you, nor will I ever change this disposition, unless I am out of my senses—I have particular reasons for it, and indeed I might excuse myself from telling you so.

AMORVEIL.

Nay, now you make me miserable—if piquing my pride was not in question, I should be made wretched by your indifference.

FLORINDA.

What can I say to this, but that I pity him.—(*Aside*)

AMORVEIL.

If you felt but half of what I suffer—and what an extraordinary situation I am in.

FLORINDA.

As to that matter it cannot be more curious and embarrassed than mine, I assure you—but I hope you are not going to leave us in reality.

AMORVEIL.

Yes, I must go, or lose my senses, as I have already done my heart—and I was to blame in not leaving you the instant I first saw you.

FLORINDA.

I should forget that I am listening to him.—(*Aside*)—You cannot say that ever I encouraged your passion.

AMORVEIL.

But you cannot hinder me from adoring you, and on my knees I must confess my love—though I leave you the minute after.

(*As he is kneeling, Old and Young Meanwell enter at the back Scene, listening.*)

FLORINDA.

It wanted but this to make a perfect novel of my story. What a miserable creature I am! but it was my own folly and imprudence brought me to it.—(*Half aside*)

H

AMOR-

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

AMORVEIL.

But before I rise, ah! give me some assurance that I am not an object of your hatred.

FLORINDA.

Rise, *Skipwell*, rise, some body may catch you in this posture——do, I beseech you rise——I'll say any thing you please——I do not hate you, I assure you I do not.

AMORVEIL.

What, Letty, if I was not what I appear to be, but a man of family and fortune, and that I loved you as much as I do now, you would have no dislike to me?

FLORINDA:

I should be a fool if I had.

AMORVEIL.

You would return me love for love.

FLORINDA.

I should return you——(*Seeing her father and brother coming.*)

OLD MEANWELL.

A very tender, amorous duetto indeed!—What a pity it is to interrupt such a pair of cooling doves.

FLORINDA.

This compleats my confusion——(*Aside*)——Could I hinder the man going on his knees, Sir?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Not if he was saying his prayers to you, Letty!

OLD MEANWELL.

I have something to say to you in private, girl—with Mr. Skipwell's leave;—you can at any time renew your conversation.

AMORVEIL.

I was just going as you came in, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

O yes, like a pilgrim to his saint—we saw you on your knees.

OLD MEANWELL.

Go then, and behave with more respect to your master than it is said you do.

AMORVEIL.

Me, Sir.

YOUNG

A C O M E D Y.

51

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, *you*, Sir; we hear strange stories of your ingratitude, and misrepresentation of him——*this* damsel is in your confidence I find——

AMORVEIL.

I do not know what you mean, Sir.

OLD MEANWELL.

You may retire, and justify yourself another time.

AMORVEIL.

Damnation! must I suffer this.—— Oh cruel disguise! that subjects me to such painful restraint and indignity——
(*Aside.*)

[Exit Amorveil.

(*Florinda walks about discomposed.*)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

There must be something, dear Sister, there must be something in this——

FLORINDA.

In your head, Brother——but nothing in mine——except amazement at your questions and suspicions.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Did not I tell you this spark would make love to you?

OLD MEANWELL.

Come, come, it is this mighty soldier that has given you an antipathy to his master.

FLORINDA.

Pray, was it that audacious mock-gentlewoman, Mrs. Letty, told you so?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

No indeed, it is evident from your own behaviour, that has become very testy and captious of late!

FLORINDA.

Because I am quite sick of this foolish pantomime, and would have thrown off my disguise before now, had I my father's permission.

OLD MEANWELL.

I cannot at present indulge you, and as I agreed to it to humour you, you must please me by wearing it a little longer.

H 2

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

If I do, it is very reluctantly, Sir;—but I must assure you Amorveil's servant is not at all blameable in this affair.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Well, there is but one way of settling it to the satisfaction of all parties—Skipwell is suspected, so we will persuade his master to discharge him—Do not you think it is the best method, Sister?—*(Archly.)*

FLORINDA.

What a provoking disguise—*(Aside)*—O certainly: and if that is done I must likewise desire Mrs. Letty not to come near me—I hate *her* even more than *Amorveil*.

OLD MEANWELL.

Do not be so prejudiced, my dear, suspend your judgment 'till you know him better—I'll answer for it, *Amorveil* is the man of your choice at last.

FLORINDA.

Will not you allow me to have eyes, to have ears, Sir; I have already heard and seen enough of him to detest him!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

In spite of this, I'll lay any wager that you'll marry *Amorveil*, and with your own consent—but I must intercede for *Skipwell*, and beg you will forgive him, Sir.

FLORINDA.

As he has not offended us, we have no right to be angry with him.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Then since he "*so teizes and so pleases*"—my sister, to oblige *her* father!

OLD MEANWELL.

We will leave him to his Master.

FLORINDA.

Well, Brother, since you will not leave off amusing yourself at my expence—I'll no longer pay for the entertainment; so good bye, Mr. Banter.

[Exit.]

OLD and YOUNG MEANWELL.

Hah! hah! hah!

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, I think by the time the piece is concluded, they will both have reason to be heartily tired of their concealment, and sufficiently punish'd for the plot contrived against each other.

[Exeunt.]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

A C T IV.

SCENE I. *The Street about Whitehall.*

Enter Colonel Belgrade and Mervil.

MERVIL.

I SINCERELY welcome you to London, Colonel, after so long an absence from our native land.

BELGRADE.

Yes, my fellow-traveller, we may now say that we are safely embosomed in our mother-country.—O England, thou land of promise!—thou paradise, from which it is a curse to be exiled; and yet, 'till I behold my dearest daughter—'till I clasp her in those fond paternal arms, even home is not a place of rest to me.

MERVIL.

We have weathered many a boisterous gale, and hard blow together, Colonel;—but are at length returned to enjoy prosperity and peace—the just rewards of your military fame, and the services done your country abroad.

BELGRADE.

And for whose sake every danger and fatigue are the pleasure of my life; and when shared with companions
like

like you, my friend, gives rapture to remembrance as we talk over scenes of past warfare.

MERVIL.

And returning from our glorious toils boast the delight of meeting our fellow-subjects (who have enriched their country at home) ready with open arms to receive us as we lay our mingled laurels at their feet!

BELGRADE.

But come—as I have delivered my dispatches and announced my real name, which you know is not *Campton*, but *Belgrade*.—I'll now send express for Goodly and my daughter—will you come with me, Mervil?

MERVIL.

You'll excuse me, as I am to meet a friend by appointment at the hotel, where I'll wait your return.

[Exit.

BELGRADE.

Oh, my *Caroline*, if thou art alive and well, what joy and prosperity a loving father has in store for you!—

[Exit.

Scene, the Park.

Enter Sir Harly Paramour, at reading a Letter, FERRET following.

SIR HARLY.

If this stratagem succeeds, I'll have *Caroline* in my power at all events—the forgery of *Goodly's* hand—His sudden arrival in town to meet her father, just supposed to have arrived in safety here—his impatience to see her—confinement by a sudden fit of the gout—are all natural enough—the whole family at *Meanwell's* otherwise engaged—*Caroline*, no person immediately to consult with—duty, affection and surprise, will at once possess her heart, and leave no pause for suspicion—My plot must take—she comes to the place appointed—and then—(Speaking to the Servant)—Here, *Ferret*, deliver this letter as I ordered you—attend the lady where I directed;—you have had good practice, and know your business.

[Exit Ferret.

Sir

Sir Harly Paramour, followed by Captain Blenheim.

BLENHEIM.

Well overtaken, Sir, I came to inform you I know you
—You have misrepresented me to power, and stopped
my promotion—supposed me capable of the most disho-
nourable action, to assist you in the seduction of unsuspect-
ing virtue, and to betray the daughter of my friend.

SIR HARLY.

Stand off, I desire you, Sir.

BLENHEIM.

To be the pander of your vices—By Heaven, I'll not
suffer the imputation—Draw, Sir, draw this instant, and
defend yourself.

SIR HARLY.

Have you forgot who I am, and that you may be ca-
shiered for your insolence?

BLENHEIM.

Dastardly and provoking subterfuge—Yes, I know the
stations you disgrace—but you are not at present in the
senate, nor shall any privileged place or restraint shelter
you from my just resentment.

SIR HARLY.

What, draw upon me—attempt my life—

BLENHEIM.

Yes, and both my king and my country will, I hope,
forgive a soldier who thus vindicates his honour, supports
the cause of virtue, and chastises unmerited injury and in-
sult—Draw, Sir.

SIR HARLY.

It is well, Sir—I will find a way to humble your
high and mighty arrogance, depend upon it—

BLENHEIM.

Insensible and sneaking fribble—I'll have you posted as
you deserve;—the very macaronies shall hoot you from
their clubs, and the women from their cotteries; and since
words cannot rouse you to maintain even your own injus-
tice—let this provoke you to it—*(Offers to strike him with
his sword.)*

Enter

Enter Belgrade, in a hurry interposing.

BELGRADE.

For shame, Sir, put up your sword—never attack a man that has not spirit to defend himself.

SIR HARLY.

You may depend upon it I shall amply revenge myself another way. *[Exit Harly.]*

BELGRADE.

How could a gentleman bear such provoking treatment?

BLENHEIM.

You are a brother officer, Sir, and witness to this dastardly behaviour!—but what do I behold! is it possible—or am I so blinded with passion that I cannot distinguish friend from foes—*(Stands surprised)*

BELGRADE.

Can it be Blenheim that I see?—*(Looking stedfastly).*

BLENHEIM.

It is—it must be him—my long lost friend—my Belgrade, do not you recollect your *Blenheim*?

BELGRADE.

O! Heavens, is it you?—Let me unfold you to my heart—*(They embrace)*—This indeed is a full recompence for years of absence and past adversity!

BLENHEIM.

When did you come home? Where have you been concealed from your distressed—enquiring—friends? The world has long given you up for lost.

BELGRADE.

None in Europe but *Goodly* knew of my existence—I enjoined him to keep my situation secret, 'till I myself assisted at the discovery.

BLENHEIM.

But why were your other friends kept in ignorance of your fate?

BELGRADE.

Know that my place of refuge, after I disposed of my commission, and sequestered my all (to discharge my bond for that treacherous and ungrateful fellow, *Squander*) was India—with my exile I changed my name to *Campton*—

Fortune

Fortune crowned my hopes, and from knowledge in my profession, I obtained in that country, honour, preferment and riches.

BLENHEIM.

But why should this be a secret from your daughter *Caroline*?

BELGRADE.

Concluding that if the world heard I was in *Asia* my girl might be vain of her golden dreams—and I rather chose her to depend more on her intrinsic worth than any riches I could bring her.

BLENHEIM.

And how valuable in herself alone!—(*Aside*)

BELGRADE.

And now with a fortune, though not a *Nabob's*!—sufficient and more honourable for me, as it was neither acquired by rapine, cruelty, or speculation!—Thus happily arrived—you see me returned both for *her* sake, and at the service of friends not so lucky as myself.

BLENHEIM.

Time or absence has not altered your heart I find!

BELGRADE.

But now tell me, in return, how you became engaged in this late rencontre.

BLENHEIM.

You will be surprised when I tell you that *your* honour was as much concerned in the contest as *mine*.

BELGRADE.

My honour! you surprise me indeed—

BLENHEIM.

Yes, *your* honour—but I must defer the explanation for a more agreeable subject, by acquainting you that your amiable daughter is now in London.

BELGRADE.

In London! when, where—O satisfy all a father's anxiety and impatience!

BLENHEIM.

Yes, in town at Mr. Meanwell's, whose daughter you remember was her school-fellow.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

BELGRADE.

Unexpected happiness.—Come, fly, conduct me to the place, and bless a parent's eyes with the tenderest wishes of his heart.

BLENHEIM.

With equal pleasure I conduct you to her, the house is just at hand, and your impatience is a spur to mine.

[Exeunt hastily.]

Scene changes to an Apartment in Meanwell's House.

Enter Amorveil and Skipwell.

SKIPWELL.

Ah! good Sir, my most honoured master—I beg of you—

AMORVEIL.

You impudent double-faced—impostor!

SKIPWELL.

O, Sir, do not take the game out of my hand when I am going to muzzle it—Do not stop me when I am just entering the goal—be compassionate to old faithful servant, whose fortune entirely depends on your secrecy.

AMORVEIL.

You deserve to be severely horse-whipt for even thinking of it—and if it was not for the coat you wear—

SKIPWELL.

Could I deserve it on a better occasion, Sir, than as a country-man and as foster-brother.

AMORVEIL.

A rascal to think—

SKIPWELL.

All true, Sir—but I am not the first rascal that have made their fortune.

AMORVEIL.

What! would you have me let a worthy man be colonized by your tricks, and his family deceived under my name and character?—Would you disgrace your country, you dog, you?

SKIP-

SKIPWELL.

Ah! Sir, what is a man's country to *his own* interest now-a-days.

AMORVEIL.

If you ever mention it again, the instant I have discovered you to the family, I will have you dismantled of your robes, and put in the pillory.

SKIPWELL.

But listen to me, Sir——this dear girl adores me——loves me as a kitten does cream——if I acquaint her of my station, and that she still should have a liquorish-tooth for a healthy, clever, tight fellow like me——though not a gentleman——

AMORVEIL.

Oh! if they once know you they may do as they please——I wash my hands out of it.

SKIPWELL.

Then I'll immediately go and discover myself to the tender-hearted generous lady, unplume myself of lace and feathers, and convince you that it is not the colour or quality of a coat, nor all your borrowed finery, that can make any difference in her love, and as Mr. Homer says, in Pope's *Eye-lids*,

“When great *Ulysses* on the threshold trod,

“Stript of his rags—he blaz'd forth like a god.”

AMORVEIL.

The fellow's in heroics.

SKIPWELL.

You will see what I am able to do in *proper personis*, as we say in Latin——and depend upon it that from carrying Brown Befs I shall carry this Lady, and have cleverness enough, from waiting at the side-board, to sit at the table; and that instead of jolting *behind* the coach, become an agreeable companion in a post-chaise. [Exit.]

AMORVEIL.

All that passes here is like a dream——it is scarcely credible——but I wish I could see Letty, perhaps by discovering myself to her, she could relieve me from this embarrassment; and yet to leave her would be the greatest misfortune of all!——I'll see if I can find her——

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

(*As he is retiring, enter Florinda from the back Scene.*)

FLORINDA.

No place can give me rest—my heart's tormented and disturbed! this strange adventure distracts me—even my friends put a malicious construction on my best intentions—I mistrust every face I look at—I am dissatisfied with every body, and most of all with myself—in short—

(*Amorveil and Florinda meeting.*)

AMORVEIL.
I was in search of you, Letty.

FLORINDA.
It was hard to find me, for I have lost myself—(*Going.*)

AMORVEIL (*Stopping her.*)
Stay, I conjure you, stay, this is the last time I shall trouble you—it is on a matter of the greatest consequence to your mistress and the honour of the family.

FLORINDA.
Tell it to themselves then—I never see you or hear you but you give me some cause of uneasiness.

AMORVEIL.
You have the same effect on me—but know that matters will now wear a different face from what they have heretofore done.

FLORINDA.
Well since you raise my curiosity, I'll hear you *this* once, and *this* time only.

AMORVEIL.
But will you promise to be secret?

FLORINDA.
I never yet betrayed any one.

AMORVEIL.
You only owe the confidence I am going to place in you to the esteem I bear you.

FLORINDA.
Never mind the motive, but trust my fidelity and believe me.

AMOR-

AMORVEIL.

Then know, that the man now speaking to you is not what *he* seems.

FLORINDA.

What are you then?—*(Impatiently)*

AMORVEIL.

O, Letty, now is your time to triumph—Is there any one coming?

FLORINDA.

No—

AMORVEIL.

The situation things are in forces me to this discovery.

FLORINDA.

Well do not keep me in torture, I beg of you.

AMORVEIL.

The person now with your mistress is not what she takes him for!

FLORINDA.

What is he then?

AMORVEIL.

My servant.

FLORINDA.

And—*(with agitation)*—

AMORVEIL.

I myself am—*Amorveil!*

FLORINDA.

Ah! now I clearly see into my heart, it foreboded this.—

(Aside)

AMORVEIL.

I hoped under this disguise to know your lady more perfectly before I declared myself—but the stratagem has entangled me—I hate the woman I ought to be married to, and love the *maid* who should in me only have found a *new master*.

FLORINDA.

I'll keep my own council—he shall not know me yet.

(Aside)

AMORVEIL.

How would you have me act?—Your mistress has such a vulgar taste, that she's actually enamoured of my footman;

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man; and if I do not instantly prevent it, the father will consent to their nuptials.—What am I to do?

FLORINDA.

Your case is a most extraordinary one indeed, Sir.—But first of all I request your pardon for whatever has appeared disrespectful or improper in my past behaviour to you.

AMORVEIL.

Do not speak of it, it will only recall the distance between us, and make me more wretched and disconsolate.

FLORINDA.

But I permit you, Sir, to revoke all the kind and affectionate declarations made me, as I would not have you let down your dignity, on a poor servant like me.

AMORVEIL.

But though I cannot unite my fate with yours, Lefty, (since I am not fortunate enough to gain your love) yet it is some consolation that you declared you did not hate me.

FLORINDA.

Hist—I hear somebody coming—have a little patience with regard to your servant—matters are not so desperate as you think—we will meet again immediately, and consult how to relieve you from this perplexing affair.

AMORVEIL.

You shall entirely direct me.

[Exit Amorveil.]

FLORINDA.

Both my love and prudence required this discovery.

Enter Young Meanwell.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

So I have caught you again, Sister, and perhaps almost in the same situation—Pray were you teaching the young man his prayers again?

FLORINDA.

(You may now say whatever you please, brother, for I have such agreeable news to tell you.)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

What about?

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

Skipwell is not Skipwell—nor Amorveil Amorveil.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I do not understand you—you speak in riddles.

FLORINDA.

I had it just now from himself.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

From whom pray? or what is it, I cannot comprehend you?

FLORINDA.

Come my father must be informed of it—I'll have occasion of your assistance too—I must now concert a plan to secure the heart I before rejected—and request, Brother, that you will be very secret, and not mention a word of it.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

O! never fear, I'll be secret enough, for I cannot divulge what I do not know.

FLORINDA.

Come along, Brother, let us lose no time; there never was any thing more propitious or more pleasing than this is.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I see that *Amorveil* has thrown off the mask at last.

[*Exeunt together.*]

Scene changes to the Street before Meanwell's House.

Enter Belgrade and Blenheim, the former in a Chairman's great Coat.

BELGRADE.

I think this disguise will perfectly secure me from immediate discovery, for as you observe, Blenheim, it would be too cruel to reveal myself abruptly, and all at once surprise my Caroline.

BLENHEIM.

Her heart is too sensible and affectionate to bear it—to behold you safe and well is the utmost of her hopes and wishes.

BELGRADE.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

BELGRADE.

Which added to my prosperity will be new matter of exultation to her—but as your being with me would look particular—Suppose *I* was first to go alone, and after seeing *Meanwell* get him to break it to her, and announce my arrival by degrees.

BLENHEIM.

With all my heart, do so—there's the house, but do not let the agitation of your spirits discompose you, and betray you too soon!

BELGRADE.

Never fear—I'll be firm as *Elliot* on the rock!

BLENHEIM.

Well I'll return by the time I think you have discovered yourself, and that affecting scene is over, 'till then adieu, and believe me my heart is ever with you.

[Exit *Blenheim*.]

BELGRADE.

And now for the most interesting moment of my life.

(Going towards the door.)

Enter *Sir Harly Paramour's* Servant, *Ferret*.

FERRET.

As my phiz may be too well known here—if I could but get some *honest, idle fellow* to assist me now, and deliver this letter—and here is one to my hand—(seeing *Belgrade*)—I say, friend, if you are not in a hurry, a word with you, if you please.

BELGRADE.

What is your commands, friend.

FERRET.

Are you acquainted with that house?

BELGRADE.

I never darkened the door in my life.

FERRET.

Well! have you a mind to do a good job there?—and turn a penny for yourself.

BELGRADE.

BELGRADE.

An odd interruption this—*(Aside)*—With all hearts, in an honest way.

FERRET.

Will you deliver this letter then, at yonder house?
(Showing it.)

BELGRADE.

To Miss Belgrade—*(Aside with emotion)*—I cannot read your writing hand—But who shall I say it is from?

FERRET.

Oh! from a relation of her's just come from abroad—and if you can give it into her own hands, so much the better—it is on most pressing business, and this will pay the postage—*(Giving him a purse.)*

BELGRADE.

A bribe and mystery are proofs of treachery—but I will know the contents—*(Aside)*—This binds me to your service; but shall I get admittance to a fine lady in this here dress of mine?

FERRET.

O yes, it is quite the thing for the business—but let us go into that tavern, where I will give you your cue, in which if you'll assist me you shall be rewarded like a nabob.

BELGRADE.

You may depend upon me—This may prove a fortunate discovery—*(Aside.)*

[Exit.]

Scene changes to the Hall in Meanwell's House.

Enter Young Meanwell, met by Amorveil.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Stay, Skipwell, a word with you.

AMORVEIL.

What would you please to say, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

You have made love to our maid, Letty, I understand.

AMORVEIL.

How could one be in company with her, and refrain from it, Sir?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Does she receive you kindly——?

AMORVEIL.

You would not have me so ungallant as to tell, Sir—
But suppose *she* had a partiality for me, how does it concern you, Sir.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

A partiality for you! a fine story truly——No—no—
she could not have such a despicable opinion of herself as
to look at one *so much beneath her hopes!*

AMORVEIL.

So much beneath her hopes!——

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, for I'll condescend to tell you, Sir, that I have a
very *honourable regard* and *brotherly affection* for this girl,
and she knows it, and it is her own fault if she remains
long single, let my father take it as he will.

AMORVEIL.

O, this accounts for the high and ambitious tone my
lady talks in—(Aside)

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I therefore cannot brook a lover of your rank in her train.

AMORVEIL.

Faith! I believe you, Sir, for I am not satisfied with
a rival like you, as you must of course bear away the
prize—if she loves you in return.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

'Loves me in return;' do you imagine I am not de-
serving of it?

AMORVEIL.

O, yes, Sir, but you do not expect praise from one you
suppose your rival?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Pray who am I speaking to? You seem a very conceited
kind of a gentleman!

AMORVEIL.

Speaking to, Sir—to Skipwell.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Well, I desire I may never hear or see any more of
your attempts on *Lizzy's* affections—if I do, your master
must

must correct you, or you will find me a different person to deal with.

[Exit Young Meanwell.]

AMORVEIL.

Must I bear these repeated injuries, and have both my honour and my love insulted? Yet I think this attachment cannot be mutual:—however *Letty* shall clear up all doubts, and one way or other disentangle me from their labyrinth of anxiety, hope and perplexity! [Exit.]

Enter Belgrade, with a letter in his hand (disguised as before).

BELGRADE.

So, so, so—here is a deep-laid wicked deception to betray my Caroline, and I am fortunately arrived to realize part of it—It is lucky I have got about me the letter designed for *Goodly*—so here it goes as a help to the deceit, and a better voucher of my arrival—(Inclosing it in *Paramour's* letter).

Enter Mervil.

BELGRADE.

Most propitiously rencountred!—

MERVIL.

Colonel Belgrade, is it possible?—Why thus metamorphosed?

BELGRADE.

Suspend your surprise I beg of you—and I'll in due time explain myself—but a delay now would frustrate all—search instantly for *Blenheim*, and send him to *this* direction if you meet him—(Giving a card)—where I beg to see you as soon as possible!

MERVIL.

Your life has been wrapt in mystery and adventures—but I would lay down mine for such a worthy character,

[Exit.]

BELGRADE.

And now the place that was designed to betray my daughter in, shall be the scene of my discovery, and the villains shame and disappointment that would deceive her.

[Exit hastily.]

Scene changes to another Apartment in Meanwell's House.

Enter Old Meanwell and Letty.

LETTY.

Sir, you told me you gave Amorveil up entirely to my management—I took you at your word, and have now taught him to hop after me like a *pet magpie*; but do you think my mistress will resign her pretensions to him?

OLD MEANWELL.

O yes; she bids me tell you that she has given up all right and title to him, as you took so much pains to train him to your own liking.

LETTY.

And have I really your permission to marry him, Sir?

OLD MEANWELL.

Have not I given it already?—You have my consent without his asking it—but I must lay one restriction on you to exculpate ourselves—I insist upon it, that you will give him a hint who you are.

LETTY.

O Lord, Sir, if I give him the least hint, that will be entirely *‘letting the cat out of the bag.’*

OLD MEANWELL.

But you know he follows you about like a *pet magpie*—and he is so much under your command that I desire you will do it.

LETTY.

Well, for Heaven's sake retire, Sir—my enamorado's to meet me—this you know is the finishing stroke to make my fortune—so leave me a clear stage, and fair play!

OLD MEANWELL.

Acquit yourself handsomely then.

LETTY.

Never fear, Sir, and now compleat my conquest!—

[*Exit Meanwell.*]

—What a lucky girl thou art, Letty—and how good this kind family has been to you? O I shall run wild with my good fortune, and so outshine the world in dress, equipage, rontes,

rontes, masquerades, balls, and I do not know what! —
But here comes my lover —

Enter Skipwell.

SKIPWELL.

Have I at length found you, my dove? — Ah! as the
play say — 'Was it not unkind to leave me like a turkey
drooping, all alone?'

LETTY.

Rather, illiterate — but no matter his fortune makes
amends — (*Aside*) — I am sure, Sir, it is not my wish to
be absent from you — for I have drooped like a moulting
Canary bird, since we parted.

SKIPWELL.

Oh! you are sweeter and dearer to me — than molasses
to a Yankee Doodle.

LETTY.

And you are the very honey-comb, currant-jelly, and
marmalade of my affection.

SKIPWELL.

Oh, the delicious words! — do let my lips smack them
up from yours —

I'm brim-full of love, and you're all over charms,
And like a lad of wax I must melt in your arms.

(*Kissing her*)

LETTY.

Oh! fye, Sir — you are so pressing upon one —

SKIPWELL.

O that is true — pray, Miss, accept this bucket of myrtle.

(*Presenting some myrtle*)

LETTY.

'Tis vastly pretty, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

And like yourself, Ma'am, the more you squeeze it, the
sweeter it is.

LETTY.

Oh! Lord, Sir!

SKIPWELL.

Egad, as she is in so coming a humour, I had better
for fear of a discovery propose a private marriage — (*Aside*)

— Sweet

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION.

—Sweet, sugar plumb of affection, I am dying with impatience at the delay of our happiness—What say you to a private match! I'll go and marry you instantly, for I am *broiling* on Cupid's gridiron.

LETTY.

I'll strike while the iron is hot—How he jumps into my wishes!—*(Aside)*

SKIPWELL.

Well, my primrose, what say you?

LETTY.

Why, Sir, if I thought you would not consider me *too forward*.

SKIPWELL.

Too forward, my tit-mouse, not in the least, I should hate you if you was *too backward*—In the name of love, then, let the priest get before the lawyer; for I know one at hand, who will tack us together before you can say trap-stick.

LETTY.

Oh, la, Sir, but what shall I say to my papa?

SKIPWELL.

We will come back and fall upon our marrow-bones, ask pardon, and say that our love was so violent we could not help it.

LETTY.

Well, on one condition, I'll consent.

SKIPWELL.

Name it quickly, then, sugar-candy of my soul—

LETTY.

That you will keep our marriage secret, 'till I give you leave to mention it.

SKIPWELL.

Silent as a dumb man—Come, then, my girl—we will fly to Father Tackum—I'll throw my commission at your feet, and you shall do what you please with my truncheon.

DUET

D U E T.

I.

SKIPWELL.

WHEN buckPd to you,

LETTY.

Let's hear what you'll do!

SKIPWELL.

No words can explain it my chuck,

My chuck;

LETTY.

But will you be fond?

SKIPWELL.

No drake in a pond

E'er took such delight with his duck,

His duck.

LETTY.

Nor pidgeon, nor dove,

SKIPWELL.

Nor sparrow in love.

BOTH.

Were ever so mutual and true,

And true;

LETTY.

Nor duck with her drake,

Such pleasure can take,

BOTH.

As I my dear charmer with you,

With you.

II. LETTY.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

II.

LETTY.

Thus both of one mind,

SKIPWELL.

How pleasing and kind!

LETTY.

Then take me for better for worse,

I

For worse.

SKIPWELL.

To frolic and play,

LETTY.

*To love and obey,**If you'll but take care of the purse,**The purse.*

SKIPWELL.

Then come my dear spouse,

LETTY.

We'll go pledge our vows,

BOTH.

*And fondle like husband and wife,**And wife;*

SKIPWELL.

*I'll be quite the thing,**And slip on the ring;*

BOTH.

*Your humble cumtumble for life,**For life.**[Exit hastily, with his arm round her waist.]*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT

A C T V.

SCENE I. *The Street before Meanwell's House.**Enter Blenheim, met by a Servant.*

SERVANT.

O Captain Blenheim, I am glad to meet you—Miss Belgrade has just left our house in a very strange manner, and all in tears!

BLENHEIM.

How, of her own accord, or carried off!

SERVANT.

I can tell you no more, Sir, than a person delivering her a letter, and hearing her, as she flew down stairs, cry out, 'Take me to my cousin Goodly!—O, my dear father, art thou then alive and safe?'—And then springing into a chair that stood ready at the door, went away with the messenger that attended her.

BLENHEIM.

This must be some pre-concerted plot of Sir Harly's before our late adventure—Which way are they gone?

SERVANT.

Down there, Sir, I still see the chair about the middle of the street—we'll easily overtake them.

BLENHEIM.

But was there not a stranger called on Mr. Meanwell just now, on private business?

SERVANT.

Not to my knowledge, Sir.

BLENHEIM.

What can become of Belgrade?—But no matter, my Caroline's in danger, and there is not a minute to be lost when innocence and beauty are in the toils of treachery and seduction!

[Exeunt hastily.]

L

SCENE

SCENE II. *A Room in Meanwell's House.**Enter Old and Young Meanwell and Florinda.*

FLORINDA.

If I did not love Amorveil you must own I should be very ungrateful.

OLD MEANWELL.

So you got a little out of him in the conversation you had together.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

No, he was too crafty, and never thrown off his guard though I endeavoured to put his temper to the test.

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, I am very glad that he is the dupe of his own stratagem—nothing however can be more flattering to him than the discretion with which you, *Flora*, have hitherto acted.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

But how far has he proceeded, Sister; I hope his jealousy of me will not have any adverse consequences?

FLORINDA.

I have not the least reason to be dissatisfied with him;—and as to you, the next interview must bring about eclat.

OLD MEANWELL.

Why, Girl, you have not vanity enough to expect that in your present character, he'll be so desperate as to offer you his hand?

FLORINDA.

Yes, Father, else he never shall have mine—but I know we are destined for each other—it was a match registered above, and must be accomplished here;—what obligations I owe you, Sir, for indulging my scheme—*Amorveil* can never think of the story without loving me, and I'll never talk of it, without loving him—it was laying the foundation of our happiness for life—it is an adventure, the romantic incidents of which must form an inte-

interesting story for a novel—it is the most propitious contrivance of chance—the most *lucky deception*.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Hey, day! Sister, how you run on, what a clack of eloquence possesses you.

OLD MEANWELL.

Well, if *you* end as you began, it will be the most delightful entertainment to all parties.

FLORINDA.

You will see that immediately—I tell you Amorveil is conquered, and I have him in my chains.

OLD MEANWELL.

And they are golden ones, which is more than he expected; but I begin to pity his sufferings, and wish him relieved from his solicitude.

FLORINDA.

But I must be witness to more before I display my compassion.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

To see prudence lose the victory in the conflict—
Eh, Flora!

OLD MEANWELL.

As much as to say that he should be sensible of his folly and disgrace, and yet submit to your fascination!—What a presumptuous arrogance of self-love!

FLORINDA.

It is the self-love of a woman, father, and that never varies from its object—but go to your posts, and you'll see how I will compleat my conquest.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Scene changes to an Apartment at Madame Bordelle's.

Enter Sir Harly Paramour and Madame Bordelle.

M. BORDELLE.

Blessings on your sweet face, Sir Harly—you be always be always so good to dese young *creators*, and be so sand of *pushing* dem into the world!

SIR HARLY.

But you will mind the directions I gave you, Madame Bordelle—to keep all quiet, and every body out of the way.

M. BORDELLE.

Nefer fear, your Honour—you be too generous, not to be vell served.

SIR HARLY.

But I wonder what keeps my messenger?

M. BORDELLE.

I fee de one chair coming dis way, Sir.

SIR HARLY (*looking out*).

Aye, and more company than I bargained for;—my servant not there, and *Blenheim* in the groupe! I fear I am betrayed, so it is time to secure myself; take care of yourself, Madame Bordelle—I'll get into your bed-chamber.

M. BORDELLE.

Oh fye, Sir Harly, sure you not leaf a poor veak yoman in de trouble?

(*Sir Harly shutting himself up in a closet.*)

A noise without.

(*BELGRADE's voice.*)

I say, let in the chair—we must see Sir Harly Par amour.

(*A voice answers.*)

Indeed, Sir, we cannot admit you, without our mistress's leave.

SIR HARLY (*Opens the closet-door, with a cap of Madame Bordelle's on his head*).

Do not, dear Madame Bordelle, let them in if you can help it, 'till I put on one of your gowns at any rate.

(*Shutting the door again.*)

M. BORDELLE.

My house be my chateau, and me not suffer any riot or bat doings in it.

(*BELGRADE's voice.*)

Give us admittance, I say, or we will force a passage—

(*A noise as if a door was forced.*)

M. BOR-

M. BORDELLE.

Jepeur dat I ave got into de scrape, mais adieu, *mauvaise*
note for de reputation of my house and character! —

(BLENHEIM'S voice without.)

Here, Miss Belgrade, keep this parlour as your citadel;
do not be afraid——lock the door upon yourself, and John
shall stand centinel.

Enter Blenheim and Belgrade.

BLENHEIM.

So, Madame Bordelle, you were to be the god-mother
on this occasion, I suppose?

M. BORDELLE.

Oh ciel, not I, Sir, nine months to come would be de
time for dat—I vas only to ave give the young lady away
——dat's all, Sir——for Sir Harly told me he had de li-
cence and de parson ready!

BELGRADE.

But come, where is Sir Harly?

M. BORDELLE.

He be not here.

BLENHEIM.

It is in vain to trifle——we know he is in this house——
instantly discover him, or the constables are ready for your
ladyship.

M. BORDELLE.

O Lord, Sir, do not fright one body——Sir Harly be
gone away from *dis*, me assure you.

(*Pointing to the closet door.*)

BELGRADE.

Come, come, we know he is in some of these cham-
bers——(*Trying the closet door.*)——O! he is here I dare
say, for the door is bolted within-side.

BLENHEIM (*Going towards the door.*)

What, ho!——Mr. Goodly, here is your ward Caro-
line——Belgrade, come to your appointment——do, open
the door, and behold how impatient the poor girl is to see
you!

M. BOR-

M. BORDELLE.

There be no Monsieur Goodly dere, Sir.

BELGRADE.

What, will you not answer?—You are in great torture I fear—if your gout is violent—you are very quiet under its agony.

BLENHEIM.

Here is your old friend, her father, too, just arrived from abroad—How can you hide yourself from such a pleasing meeting, Mr. Goodly, and of your own contriving too?

M. BORDELLE.

Monsieur Goodly! de gout! her father!—Vat can all dis mean?

BELGRADE.

And here is that good motherly woman, Madame Bordelle, and the parson, ready for the clandestine marriage.

M. BORDELLE (*going to the key-hole.*)

I say, Monsieur Goodly, or Sir Harly, or vat de devil be your name, entrez done, and make a my house free of dese troublesome people—sure you not be afraid of yourself?

(*A noise without.*)

Help! help! help!

BELGRADE.

What can be the matter? He is making his escape, I fear, and perhaps Caroline is in danger.

(*A noise without.*)

Help! help! help!

BLENHEIM.

Then here's at the door to be certain.

(*They burst open the closet door and enter.*)

[*The Scene opens to the street, and discovers Sir Harly, in a calash, cloak and loose robe of Madame Bordelle's, hanging outside of the closet window, suspended by the train of the gown, caught in his attempting to escape—Madame Bordelle, Milliner, wrote over the door—Belgrade, Blenheim and Madame Bordelle, appearing at an opposite window, laughing.*]

SIR

SIR HARLY.

Help! help! help! do, Madame Bordelle, order some of your damned rascals to assist me.

BLENHEIM.

What! for running off with her cloaths, and making a woman of yourself?

BELGRADE.

O! the Gods of old always intrigued in disguise you know!

BLENHEIM.

And he that has the heart of a woman should always appear like one.

SIR HARLY.

Do, dear Madame Bordelle.

BLENHEIM.

Oh, no he's a capital sign-post, and might have answered for a *golden fleece*, had chance suspended him by the middle!

BLENHEIM.

But he is better as he is—for a battered rake, you know, is the fittest emblem for a brothel like this.

BELGRADE.

Aye, and if Madame Bordelle was hung next him as a companion—what a pair of spectacles they would make.

(*Both laugh.*)

SIR HARLY.

Curse my unlucky fate—Do *cut* me down, pray?

BLENHEIM.

What, would you make hangmen of us?

BELGRADE.

We should be very bad ones, indeed, if we took you down before your execution—(*Both laugh.*)

SIR HARLY.

I'll be the laughing-stock of all passengers—and the ridicule of the world as long as I live.

BLENHEIM.

No, they will only call you the Enchanted Knight, or Macaroni in Tribulation!

BELGRADE.

Or perhaps say—you were over head and ears in love, or soufed in claret, and so hung yourself up to dry.

BOTH.

BOTH.

Hah! hah! hah!

BLENHEIM.

Suppose you plead your privilege—and get a habeas corpus to remove the body.

M. BORDELLE.

O, Mon Dieu, vat business have de *corpse* here—sure you be not going to kill de *body* in my house?

BELGRADE.

Hah! hah! hah!—No, never fear—he will live to punish himself if he survives the shame of it?

BLENHEIM.

We have plagued him sufficiently—So, Madame Bordelle, order us a ladder—

[*Sir Harly, in struggling, breaks down, and falls into the street.*]

BELGRADE.

He has sav'd us the trouble—' for down drops the gallant gay Lothario.'

SIR HARLY.

I have had a hard fall of it, but all is safe—and now legs do your duty—(*Runs off.*)

BLENHEIM.

But he shall not escape me this way.

[*Exeunt hastily.*]

Scene changes to an Apartment in Meanwell's House.

Enter Amorveil and Skipwell.

AMORVEIL.

Well, Skipwell, have you seen the lady and discovered yourself as I ordered you.

SKIPWELL.

As I have sworn secrecy to my dalcinea about our marriage, I must greg him and dissemble a little—(*Aside*)—O yes, Sir, I told her I was not what I seemed; that my real name was *Skipwell*—that I was only a poor soldier, and occasionally your footman.—Very well, my lad, said she, every body has some rank and uniform on the stage of life—your livery costs you nothing—so much the better for us both.

AMOR-

AMORVEIL.

What a bombastic ridiculous story you are telling me.

SKIPWELL.

O, Sir, you may lead a woman with a cobweb though you cannot drag her with a cable; and I have done it to some purpose, for we are going to be tethered directly.

AMORVEIL.

What! with the family's consent.

SKIPWELL.

Marry come up, and what disgrace to her family, pray?

AMORVEIL.

You are a very impudent fellow, Skipwell!

SKIPWELL.

And if it was not for a little *impudence* a *modest* man could not thrive in this world, Sir.

AMORVEIL.

But how could you bring it about?

SKIPWELL.

O, Sir, there is no path without a gap—I pursued my way, and found it.

AMORVEIL.

Pshaw! Nonsense—I cannot believe you.

SKIPWELL.

By the little god that befriends me—I will lay you any wager that I will wed her in my light-infantry jacket; nay, in my shirt, if you put me to it—I would have you to know, Sir, that a passion like ours, is not subject to the inconstancy of high life, and that I do not want a feather to carry my point; give me therefore my regimentals, and take back your trumpery.

AMORVEIL.

It is not possible;—I will therefore go myself and acquaint Mr. Meanwell how matters are situated.

SKIPWELL.

Who! old decency, my father-in-law?—O, we have him under our thumb, I assure you—he is a very good natured, jolly, honest cock, and has given his consent already.

AMORVEIL.

Pshaw! you are a blockhead—Have you seen Letty lately?

M

SKIP-

SKIPWELL.

Letty I—not that I recollect—perhaps she pass'd me unobserved, but I have other fish to fry, and above taking notice of such low cattle as waiting-maids—I have given up that kind of game to you, Sir.

AMORVELL. Vanity or love has turned the fellow's brain, I believe.

SKIPWELL.

You are free and easy; I find as usual, Sir, the great world has familiarized you to it;—however when I am married and settled I will be glad to see you.

AMORVELL.

Mighty fine—Skipwell—

SKIPWELL.

At my house in town—and hope whenever you visit England, you will make me your home, and that we will live together as old friends and new acquaintances.

AMORVELL.

You do me a great deal of honour, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

And when I am at court with my long sword, my bag, my point-knuckle-dabbers, and my *shapo-brass* under my arm, talking with princes and ambassadors—I will nod at you and salute you this way!

AMORVELL. O, your humble servant, condescending Sir.

SKIPWELL.

And depend upon it, I shall not forget you, because I am a great man—I will speak to the ministers about your preferment; and when I get a regiment, never fear, you shall be one of my field-officers.

AMORVELL.

Hah! hah! hah! you do me a great deal of honour, Sir!

SKIPWELL.

But I see your waiting-maid there at the end of the gallery—perhaps you wish to see her—for I must to my love—

[Exit singing—“I kiss'd and prattled with fifty-five maids, &c.”]

AMOR-

AMORVELL.

What an original he is—But now for Letty. [Exit]

Scene changes to an Apartment in Madame Bordelle's.

Enter Belgrade (in his original dress).

And now to reveal myself to Caroline.

CAROLINE (without).

Where, where is he?—Where my deliverer—my friend—my safe-guard?—Let me, Oh! let me fly to his protecting arms!

BELGRADE.

Come, come, my Caroline, thou darling of my heart, and comfort of my life—behold your deliverer—your friend!—and what is more—your father!

(Adopting and embracing).

CAROLINE.

My father!—O gracious Heaven!

BELGRADE.

Yes, my child, your father—

CAROLINE.

Oh, where have you been hid—and why 'till now unheard of?

BELGRADE.

'Tis a long eventful tale, my dear, that I must reserve to cheat away domestic hours, for you are all my thoughts at present.

CAROLINE.

It was Providence, my dear Sir, that called you to my preservation; my deceiver little thought you were so near to succour and defend me.

BELGRADE.

And that the very snare he laid to betray you in, was to be his own punishment and disgrace.

CAROLINE.

And in the delight of seeing you alive and well—O! it was a lucky direction indeed!

BELGRADE.

With the happiest combination of incidents.

CAROLINE.

But I fear, Sir, you will think me too credulous—and I blush that our *first* meeting was destined to be in such a disgraceful situation.

BELGRADE.

Make no apologies, my dear, it was an artifice too deep and well managed not to deceive innocence and inexperience.

CAROLINE.

Your goodness in excusing me, Sir, shall be repaid by my future care and circumspection.

BELGRADE.

Besides *Goodly* often wrote me, how deserving you were of my affection; and *Blenheim* has since confirmed it—Nay, never blush, *Caroline*, it is an honour to deserve the praise of a man of merit, and I hope you will do my friend the justice to think *him* so.

CAROLINE.

If I did not regard him on your account, Sir—the many obligations I owe him in your absence.

BELGRADE.

But what says my *Caroline*, will you accept of *Blenheim* for more than a friend—to be plain with you, my dear, as the partner of your heart—as your husband?

CAROLINE.

As I staid so long in expectation of your chusing one for me, it would be ungrateful now to refuse the *first* you offer me, Sir.

BELGRADE.

Joy of my soul! let me embrace you for this proof of obedience; he is worthy to share both your fortune and esteem—Then I am to conclude, my dear, *he* has formally declared his passion.

CAROLINE.

Not positively, Sir; but I have seen through his diffident and modest humility, every look and attention that avowed his heart—at least he had an advocate in *mine* that told me so.

BELGRADE.

BELGRADE.

Well, Caroline, you shall make him double amends for the past injustice of fortune—he shall know it at Mr. Meanwell's, where he is to meet us.

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT.

Sir, the coach is ready.

BELGRADE.

And Madame Bordelle gone with the constables to the other.

SERVANT.

Yes, please your Honour—but she hopes you will not prosecute her for endeavouring to earn a little honest bread for herself.

BELGRADE.

Oh! she will have so many friends in her own way, to give her a character, that I dare say Justice will be hoodwinked, and turn a house of bad fame into a good one.

CAROLINE.

And what a shame to our laws if such wretches are suffered to escape!

BELGRADE.

Come, my dear, let us leave the detested place; I will conduct you to Florinda, who must be unhappy at your absence.

[Exeunt.]

Scene changes to a Gallery in Meanwell's House.

Enter Old and Young Meanwell.

OLD MEANWELL.

It goes on swimmingly, and just as I would have it.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, he is in full cry, and we must be in at the death.

(Retire to the side scene.)

Enter Amorveil, following Florinda.

AMORVEIL.

Stay, Letty, stay—I intreat you stay—I have something very serious to say to you.

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

To me, Sir?

AMORVEIL.

It troubles me to leave you without convincing you I do not think myself to blame in so doing.

FLORINDA.

Why need you justify yourself to me, Sir; consider, Sir, I am but a poor servant, and you make me feel I am so.

AMORVEIL.

But why let me leave you with such little reluctance—Is it because you have a lover more to your liking?

FLORINDA.

I could say something on that subject, if you were not in such a hurry!

AMORVEIL.

Say it then—it is my wish to be undeceived—but Young Meanwell loves you—he told me so, and with an honourable, brotherly affection!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

So now my plot begins to work—(Aside).

FLORINDA.

Very true——

AMORVEIL.

And I conclude you are sensible of his passion from the indifference with which you treat me.

FLORINDA.

I must own I love him equal to myself, but I never can be his wife, and he knows it.

AMORVEIL.

What a contradiction!—I am puzzled more than ever!—Explain yourself, expound this riddle, do, I conjure you, Letty, and at once tell me your situation, as my happiness is staked upon it.

FLORINDA.

Tell a man that is leaving me.

AMORVEIL.

I will not leave you—I can never leave you.

OLD MEANWELL.

I knew he would nibble at the bait again—(Aside)

FLORINDA.

FLORINDA.

Pray, cannot I regard Mr. Meanwell as a friend, and yet be sensible of another's superior merit.

AMORVEIL.

But friendship with women—

FLORINDA.

"Is sister to love?"—But believe me the love alluded to, has nothing to say to our connection.

AMORVEIL.

Still mysterious!—still enigmatical!—but since you know that I adore you above every woman upon earth; do (if you have any pity on me) do explain yourself without reserve.

FLORINDA.

Consider, Sir, the difference of our stations—you are a man of fortune and a favourite of the world, and far above such an *humble creature* as I am.

OLD MEANWELL.

How she humbles herself—(Aside).

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, Father, to be exalted—(Aside).

AMORVEIL.

Nay, do not think so poorly of yourself.

FLORINDA.

And perhaps you will laugh at the folly of it the instant you leave this house.

AMORVEIL.

No—never believe me—my esteem for you!

FLORINDA.

But as to me, what object could replace you in my affection—what amusements cheat away the pangs of absence? Be then generous enough to conceal a passion which on *your* part cannot be serious or lasting.

AMORVEIL.

I swear by all the ties of honour and esteem!

FLORINDA.

Think, Sir, how this exposes your prudence—what you owe to your own consequence, and the dignity of an ancient family!

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

O the jade, how she tugs the line—(*Aside*).

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I hope she will not break it, and lose her prey—(*Aside*).

AMORVEIL.

Oh, my dear Letitia, I adore you, respect you, above every consideration in life—there is neither rank, birth, or fortune, that such exalted sense and beauty would not honour—Give me then possession of a hand and heart I value above the world.

FLORINDA.

I cannot be insensible of such an honour, but are you persuaded of your own constancy, and that you will not be jealous of *Meanwell*.

AMORVEIL.

Nay Letitia, my love shall be immortal as the virtue that gave it birth—nor shall I ever think of *Meanwell* as a rival, but as a friend who could distinguish the merit that creates my happiness.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

I knew it would end like all romances, in the old way—
(*Aside*)

FLORINDA.

Such liberal professions are worthy of yourself.

AMORVEIL.

But will you consent to be mine?

FLORINDA.

—What, in spite of degrading yourself—in spite of your father's displeasure!

AMORVEIL.

He will forgive me the instant he has seen you—but my own inheritance is enough for both;—as to the world's opinion, my happiness will smile at its malice, and your worth be an antidote against the venom of its censure.

Enter Old and Young Meanwell. Letty and Skipwell soon after
(listening).

OLD and YOUNG MEANWELL.

Te toy! te toy! te toy! te tum!

Hah! hah! hah! hah!

OLD

OLD MEANWELL.

We have heard it all, not a syllable has escaped us—I find you have not waited for my consent.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Did not we tell you it would come to this?

FLORINDA.

Oh, my dearest father!

AMORVEIL.

What do I hear—her father!—(Aside).

SKIPWELL.

And what do I hear—her father!—(Aside).

FLORINDA.

Come, and I'll obey you with all the cheerfulness and delight due from an obedient daughter to the best of fathers.

AMORVEIL.

You, her father, Sir—

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Yes, Amorveil—the same stratagem, the same deception was contrived by mutual chance against each other.

LETTY.

Amorveil! and who the duce have I married?—(Aside).

OLD MEANWELL.

And it was by a letter from your father I knew of your disguise—which however, upon my honour, Florinda was perfectly ignorant of 'till you yourself disclosed it to her.

AMORVEIL.

But what delights me most are the proofs I gave you, Florinda, of the purity and disinterestedness of my passion!

FLORINDA.

And you may judge of the value I set upon your heart—by the means I took to gain it!

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Will Amorveil forget the affronts I gave to Skipwell.

AMORVEIL.

I not only forgive, but thank you—(Taking his hand).

N

Skipwell

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

[*Skipwell and Letty advancing.*]

SKIPWELL.

I can hide my vexation and disappointment no longer—
(*Going up to Letty*)—Who the devil are you, Ma'am?

LETTY.

A maid—as yet, Sir.

SKIPWELL.

I wish I was sure of *that*, at any rate.

LETTY.

And who the duce are you, Sir?—(*to Skipwell*).

SKIPWELL.

A soldier of—no fortune, but a man for your business.

LETTY.

That is *some* comfort however.

AMORVEIL.

This is my footman—(*to Letty*).

FLORINDA.

And this is my waiting-maid, Sir—(*to Skipwell*).

LETTY.

O, how my fine hopes are vanished! and have I married an impudent audacious varlet—a tick-plater—a frizzer of hair, and a brusher of black-ball—like a jack-daw dressed in borrowed plumes.

ALL (*but Letty and Skipwell*).

Hah! hah! hah!

SKIPWELL.

Zounds! but what a rumble I have got!—and have I married a Birmingham-counterfeit—a wearer of cast cloaths—a brusher of combs—a danner of holes—and a starcher of muslin!—nickt out in her lady's wardrobe.

ALL (*but Letty and Skipwell*).

Hah! hah! hah!

AMORVEIL.

Come, Skipwell, no more of this—but as you and Mrs. Letty have been acting for us on this occasion, I shall endeavour to reward you to your satisfaction.

FLORINDA.

Yes, our good fortune shall contribute to theirs—they must drop their grandeur and titles, but they shall amply experience my kindness.

SKIP-

SKIPWELL.

"Then, Mrs. Rib, I take you with all my soul——" for Skipwell's himself again."

LETTY.

And, Bone of my Bone, I am yours with all my heart—and you know we swore it, 'in spite of all the changes and chequers of this mortal life.'

SKIPWELL.

True—but what will you say to your papa?—
Eh, you baggage, you?

FLORINDA.

And now if my dear Caroline was here——

Enter Belgrade and Caroline.

CAROLINE.

My dear Florinda—you may now felicitate your friend—I imprudently quit this house on a forgery of Sir Harly Paramour's in Mr. Goodly's name, as if to meet my father—and Heaven propitiously brought him to me when I least expected and most wanted him—*(They salute.)*

FLORINDA.

What a recompence, my dear girl, for your absence—
(Embracing.)

OMNES *(except Skipwell and Letty).*

We all felicitate you!

OLD MEANWELL *(speaking to Belgrade).*

We bid you doubly welcome, Sir, since you have restored our Caroline, and added to our joy by your own safety and return.

BELGRADE.

A thousand thanks to all—but has not Blenheim been here yet?

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Not that we heard of——

CAROLINE.

I hope no accident has befallen him.

N 2

Enter

Enter Blenheim.

BELGRADE.

Well, *Blenheim*, what have you done with the enchanted knight?

BLENHEIM.

Poor wretch, he is more an object of our contempt than resentment—when he escaped, as you know, in his disguise, and dropped into the street——

OLD MANWELL.

What is all this?

BELGRADE.

You will hear the preceeding part of this adventure hereafter.

BLENHEIM.

You saw how he run for it—I followed and found him pursued and hooted by the rabble (who thought him a madman I suppose) 'till I at length housed him in a bagnio.

BELGRADE.

And what could he say for himself?

BLENHEIM.

Like a mean pitiful fellow, as he is, he dropped upon his knees, begged our forgiveness, swore he would instantly leave the kingdom, and never return to it more.

BELGRADE.

He must have felt that the profligacy of his conduct, and the last daring attempt against the laws of society must disgrace him.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

And banish him from a court, in which the first characters are a precept and example of virtue to their subjects!

AMORVEIL.

And whose *representatives* now adorning the kingdom from whence I came, reflect equal honour on the majesty of their station!

BELGRADE.

But now, my dear *Blenheim*, as some reward for your intelligence and friendship, I have a rich jewel I request your acceptance of—it is a token I must have you wear in

in your bosom, next your heart, as I know you will value and esteem it—it is my *Caroline*—I have consulted her inclinations, and find them as you yourself could wish.

BLENHEIM.

This indeed!

BELGRADE.

I know what your feelings would express, but it is unnecessary, continue to *love her* as much as you *deserve her*, and words are needless to convince me of it.

BLENHEIM.

I must however pay my tribute of thanks here—(*addressing himself to Caroline, and kissing her hand*)—since you forbid them to yourself.

BELGRADE.

But I have one request to make—it is, that you would retire from the army—I have experienced that when your country demands your service, a mourning wife, and weeping children is a spectacle to unman a hero!

BLENHEIM.

In all things else I would die to serve you—but were I now to quit the field of Mars, it might be said I made a convenience not a principle of arms.

YOUNG MEANWELL.

Nay, this is carrying your delicacy to a height of refinement indeed!

SKIPWELL.

We veterans never love whole bones and a quiet life—
(*Aside*)

BLENHEIM.

No, I will still be a soldier; and as to temporary absence, a daughter of yours can readily sacrifice domestic ties for the service of her country.

LETTY.

As for my part I should think of minding *my own* service first—(*Aside*).

BLENHEIM.

When I return her circling arms shall be my wreath of renown, and my sons (if I am blest with any) shall play with my laurels, and emulate the example of their father.

BELGRADE.

THE MUTUAL DECEPTION,

BELGRADE.

By the God of War, it is nobly said, expressed like a patriot and hero!—What says my Caroline?

CAROLINE.

Mr. Blenheim has my consent to act as he pleases, as I am resolved like a dutiful wife to pursue his fortunes.

OLD MEANWELL.

Well said, faith, like a girl of true candour, and with the spirit of a soldier's daughter!

AMORVEIL.

Well, this ends as it should do—with strict poetic justice to all parties.

FLORINDA.

Yes, *vice* is punished, and rewards bestowed upon the *virtue* it meant to injure.

AMORVEIL.

But I may venture to declare that those incidents, however flattering and propitious to *this* society, cannot make us perfectly happy and contented, unless *this* kind circle approves and participates in our joy.

[Exeunt omnes.]



EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

TO THE

MUTUAL DECEPTION

(BY THE AUTHOR.)

To this assembly *Plenipo* I'm sent—

With ample powers on peaceful measures bent;

And first a Treaty for a Truce propose,

Between our *Author*, and his *Critic* foes:

—If *Peace* succeeds we'll to the world reveal it,

Then join your hands to ratify and seal it.—

This makes our *envious Politicians* growl:

(*Who judge like Turks, that Females have no soul.*)

A *Woman* sent a *Statesman* work to do!

—*Aye*, and negotiate full as well as you!

Coax out your secrets, all your passions seize,

And make you grant whatever terms I please.

—I'm not the first of *Amazons* that rose,

By State-intrigues, and changing sex and cloathes:

Great *Joan D. Arc*, like *Pallas*, took the field,

And clad in armour, made Old-Britons yield;

And *D'Eon* too, that Female Chevalier,

Play'd the Ambassador and Mock-Monsieur:

While *France* and *Britain* own'd her double arts,

Her turn for business, and acknowledg'd parts—

That pleas'd the Men—but baulk'd the Women's hearts.

}
And

And as for literature, and writing well,
Let *Griffith, Montague, and Cowley* tell.

THUS while our Sex to glorious deeds are prone,
And shine in characters that men might own!

And since caprice makes novelty a passion,

And new experiments are still in fashion,

Since in *Balloons* our Sex have dar'd to soar,

And down in *Diving-bells* the deep explore!

Why may'nt our Sex through servile custom break,

Assume the *Politician, Sage, or Rake?*

Display our parts, strike all the world with wonder,

And in our turn keep the fellows under—

And since to wield the sword, or grasp the pen,

We've prov'd ourselves as competent as Men:

Let us but share your power, your ranks, your riches,

(Most of you know, how we can wear the breeches)

Our Sex might then of *Ministers* make boast,

Wise as yourselves, and fit to rule the roast,

In *Senates* then how we'd exert our lungs,

There's not a *Speaker* but wou'd dread our tongues!

And if our Monarch in his troops would corps us,

Is there a man wou'd dare to stand before us!

—Thus for the world, as for the *closet* fit,

To you our *Congress*, we those schemes submit.

Conscious our *public*, or our *private* station,

Can ne'er succeed—without your approbation,

F. T. N. S.

